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THE

BLACK AVENGER

OF THE SPANISH MAIN:

OR,

THE FIEND OF BLOOD.

A Thrilling Story of the Buccaneer Times.

BY NED BUNTLINE,

AUTHOR OF 'THE KING OF THE SEA,' ETC.



BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY F. GLEASON,

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P R E F A C E.

This story, striking, terrible and bloody as are many of its incidents, is founded on historical fact. Its hero was in his day the terror of the seas whereon he sailed, and the dread of all the coast of Spanish America; so much so, that if a Spanish mother wished to frighten a refractory child into obedience, she had but to couple her threats with the name of 'FRANCISCO SOLONIS EL PIRATO PERNICIOSO !'

'*Death to the Spaniards !*' was his battle shout—death to the Spaniards, seemed his only thought, aim and desire. Even now, at Chagres, along the Spanish Main, and in the Caribbean isles, utter but his name and the women in holy horror will cross themselves, and murmur as they shudder and turn pale—'Santa Maria guardame !' while the men, remembering his prowess and bloody cruelties, will breathe a malediction against his spirit.

The *likeness* which adorns this work, we have procured from an engraving published in his own time, and it is supposed to be very accurate. It almost *speaks* his character. In the cold haughtiness of his look, in the firm compression of the chiselled lip, in each stern lineament, you can *read* the man who knew not mercy, whose heart was as hard as his iron will, which always bent man, ay, and even circumstances to his pleasure.

But if the reader would know more of him and his terrible character, he must trace our pen through the following pages.



THE BLACK AVENGER OF THE SPANISH MAIN.

CHAPTER I.

' And much of wild and wonderful,
In these rude isles, might Fancy cull ;
For thither came, in times afar,
The hardy sons of roving war,
The pirates trained to spoil and blood,
Skilled to prepare the raven's food ;
Kings of the main their leaders brave,
Their barks the dragons of the wave.'

WILD and beautiful was the view which embraced the only harbor in the French Island of Tortuga, or Petit Guaure, and its surrounding scenery.

The harbor was small and only accessible by two narrow channels which were separated by a large rock upon whose white and ragged cliffs grew no shrub or bush, and which almost entirely hid the harbor from a seaward view, at the same time protecting it from the heavy waves which dashed with ceaseless roar against its everlasting front. On all sides the harbor was surrounded by lofty and rocky hills, almost naked of soil, but yet overgrown with the luxuriant trees of that tropic clime, whose uncovered roots seemed to rest upon the rocks or creep down through the crevices like coiling serpents. Here and there green vines were stretched along the cliffs, like the ivy which clings unto the ruins of ancient grandeur ; and bright cascades with trilling murmurs leapt adown the ragged heights.

On the top of a square rock directly in front of the harbor was a small fort, the battery of which completely commanded both of the narrow entrances to the harbor, and within the low parapet of this fort was built

a single neat and substantial dwelling house. The rock was entirely isolated from the hill-side, rising perpendicularly in front from the water, and also on all other sides from the land below. The only means of access to the fort on its crest, was up a narrow pair of stairs which had been cut in the solid rock, and which could only be reached by a boat, and were not capable of permitting more than two persons to ascend abreast. The fort was indeed commanded by the lofty and almost inaccessible precipices in its rear, but these could not be gained except by passing immediately under its armed battlements; therefore when it was selected by Francisco Solonnois for his fortress of defence and chosen rendezvous of safety, it seemed as if he might defy all the force which could be brought against him.

A large cavern was in the rock, which could only be descended into from the top, and in this cave was a crystal spring of pure fresh water, and here, too, was a spacious place wherein to store his provisions, or to secure his plunder.

A very brief outline of his history up to the date when commenceth this story, will place the reader in an understanding of his position and profession, as also the circumstances which had driven him into it.

In his early infancy, at a time when he had but a dim recollection of a kind lady whom he used to kiss and call mother, and possessed a vague remembrance of a noble-looking gentleman who used to take him before him upon a prancing steed to ride where he could see the tall trees and bright flowers, he had been stolen, he knew not by whom, and brought to the island of Cuba, and there sold or disposed of to the Governor, Don Enrico Larranaga, as a servant.

In the household of this noble cavalier he had been reared, and though actually held as a slave, such was his youthful promise and intelligence, that opportunities were given him, which he eagerly grasped, to fit himself for a far different station in life than that to which cruel and untoward fate seemed to

have doomed him. The language of his birth was French; for from the north of France had he been stolen: but he spoke at an early age both the French and Spanish fluently. His greatest passion seemed to be for arms and martial amusements, and such was his early grace and proficiency in these, that the chivalric and noble Don Enrico, pleased with his taste and skill, permitted him to be taught with his own sons; and as he grew up to manhood he much excelled these in grace and skill in the use of his weapons, and in the management of his steed.

Don Enrico had an only daughter, a fair and queenly girl four years the junior of Solonnois; one accomplished with all that education could give, and possessed of beauty far beyond that of all those around her, even in that island where beauty is as inherent to woman as fragrance to the flower.

She, too, had noted the skill, grace, and manly beauty of the young Solonnois, while he secretly nourished a perfect adoration in his heart for her, though he little dreamed that his passionate dream of love was reciprocated—that she, the proud, beautiful, peerless Medora, the daughter of the haughty governor of Cuba, would condescend to look upon a *slave*, an unknown, friendless, helpless, nameless youth.

Long and secretly nourished he his passion; but like the hidden fire in a volcano, at last it became too strong for concealment. Oh who can describe his joy, when he found that an attachment which he had deemed too hopeless for utterance was returned; that all unconsciously he had won a heart which princes might have sued in vain to gain.

The attachment was discovered by the proud and angry father, and the *slave* was made to feel that he *was* indeed a slave. Chains and a dungeon for him; threats, menaces, and a vigilant duenna for her, was the result of this discovery.

But what cannot gold and love compass? what obstacles impede, what force restrain them?

Bribes and entreaties won an officer of her father's guard to the interest of Medora—the dungeon doors of Solonois were unbarred, and in her company the *slave* escaped from the surveillance of the cruel father. Hardly knowing whither they fled, they escaped to the south side of the island, where an attempt was made to capture them by a band of pirates who had landed from the Isle of Pines, then, and even at a later day, a noted rendezvous for Buccaneers.

With such desperate bravery did Solonois defend himself and the fair companion of his danger, that the desperate pirate leader, after seeing four of his best men lie quivering in death upon the earth, struck with admiration, ceased his attack, and prayed the gallant stranger to surrender, pledging his honor that no harm should ensue to him or his lady.

It would have been madness in Solonois to continue the conflict against such fearful odds, therefore he accepted the pirate's terms, who now earnestly solicited him to join his band, which was composed entirely of French and English adventurers.

The proposal was accepted—Solonois became a pirate. In an attack upon a Spanish frigate some few months afterward, the leader of the band was slain, and their rendezvous having become unsafe, the pirates had removed, first electing Solonois their captain. He had chosen the spot described in the commencement of this chapter for his stronghold, where, when he went abroad to face the perils of the sea and battle, he might leave his loved and loving bride in safety.

At the time when we introduce the reader to this scene, a pleasant evening in the autumnal time of 1656, a mild but beautiful sight presented itself; a view worthy the pencil of a Nature-loving painter.

The sky was cloudless, and over it a setting sun cast that hazy, pink-and-yellow hue which is peculiar to autumnal evenings in tropic as well as other climes. On the unruffled surface of the clear and waveless deep, just in front of the rock, lay the pirate's ship, seeming to sleep at her anchor. Upon her

deck walked a careless crew, or leaned against her low black bulwarks and gazed up toward the ramparts of the fort, where sat their chieftain beside his lovely bride, the sound of her soft voice and clear-toned guitar stealing adown upon their charmed ears as she sung to her lord and lover. A female servant sat near them upon the rough rampart, beside the muzzle of a black-mouthed cannon, and in her arms she bore a lovely infant, which clapped its little hands and gleefully crowed as it watched the waving folds of the bright red flag which gently floated on the evening air, from the ship's mast-head.

O, how lovely appeared the queenly Medora, as to a soft and sweet accompaniment she sung these words for him who sat in his manly pride by her side, regarding her beauty almost with a feeling of idolatry.

I.

Tell me not of Fame or Glory,
Speak thou not Ambition's story;
But live for me, for me alone,
Who am thine own, O, yes, thine own!

II.

Search thou not for golden treasures,
Love will yield thee richer pleasures;
Life is short, Oh, do not waste it,
Seize each joy and fondly taste it!

III.

Go no more upon the ocean,
Seek no more the storm's commotion;
But stay with me, with me, thine own,
Oh, leave me not again alone!

IV.

See, oh! see, thy babe is smiling,
Let his smiles thy heart beguiling,
Win thee, dearest, ever to stay
And cheer his mother's heart away!

Her large black eyes were tearful as she closed this touching and melodious strain, and even plainer did they implore him not again to leave her than had her words before.

Oh, what power hath woman in her tears! In anger she is powerless; in scorn she is harmless; but in tears she is resistless!

'Be not sad, oh my beautiful, my own! I soon will quit the wild life which now from necessity I lead,' said the pirate chief, ten-

derly, as he pressed a burning kiss upon her spotless brow.

'Soon? Oh, why not now, what need have we of wealth? A simple cot in the wilderness with you by my side, were far greater bliss than a residence amid the luxuries of a palace, when I am so often separated from you, who are ever in danger, and surrounded with peril.'

'Well, dearest Medora, one more trip, and if I am successful, we will retire forever from scenes of strife and danger.'

'And if not successful?'

'Why, then another may prove more so!'

'Oh, my Francisco, you cannot know how I suffer when you are absent on a cruise; how I watch the changing sky, and tremble at each cloud that flits in darkness by; how, when the night is abroad and the storm is loud and wild, I kneel and pray in agony for the return of day and calmness again! how the peal of the distant thunder sounds like a knell of all my fond hopes; how the very winds seem to come to my lonely dwelling and tell me that thou art in danger—that the elements, and man, and all things are thy enemies! Oh, my husband—my love, my life—I have left home, parents, rank, wealth, and all for thee; do resign this fearful life for me!'

'One more trip and I will, dear Medora,' said he, in a tone both calm and resolute, though kind, to which she responded not, for she knew how unchangeable was he when once resolved.

And soon the night shadows came and laid them down upon the waters, and the stars came forth and gemmed them. Then the chief, his bride and child, retired from the evening dews into their house, and none but the watchful sentinel who paced steadily to and fro, could be seen above the dark ramparts of the rock.

But from the deck of the vessel which lay at anchor arose the sound of gleeful songs and careless revelry, even from lips which had often hoarsely screamed the battle-cry of death or victory!

But at last even they were quiet, and all things seemed asleep save the restless waves which dashed their foamy fronts against the rock outside the harbor.

Morning came, and with its first rosy light the pirates obeyed their chief's command and prepared for sea. Then as the breeze freshened with the rising of the sun, as it ever does in those latitudes, Solonois bade an affectionate farewell to his weeping bride, kissed his lovely infant, and descended the rock to the boat which waited for him below, and soon stood proudly upon the deck of his armed and gallant vessel. Leaving only a chosen boat's crew to guard the little fort in his absence, the chief weighed his anchor, spread his sails to the breeze, and turned his swift prow to seaward.

As long as her eye could follow him, his bride stood upon the dark ramparts of the fort, waving her fond adieus to him who was more than life to her; and when she could no longer descry his sail upon the ocean's heaving blue, she knelt, and wept, and prayed; prayed as fond and faithful woman ever prays for him in whose joys she is alone joyful, in whose blessings she alone is blessed; prayed to him who holds the ocean in his hand, and whose breath is the desolating storm, to the God of battles, and the Ruler of the boundless universe, to restore unto her heart its lord and treasure.

Oh, if there is one thing more beautiful, more true, more constant, more strengthful on earth than woman's love, write its name in stars upon the sky, where all the world may see it. Adversity, calumny, even crime will not separate her love from him who once has gained its first, purest and deepest truth. I call not that feeling *love* which is born of passion; I deem not that love can spring into existence in the lifetime of a moment, or be born of a glance from lustrous eyes; I think it not that common feeling which can be pertly told in measured story, or breathed in song of lightness. Oh, no! words may not speak, but a lifetime's devoted acts of tender constancy alone give proof of *love that is love!*



FRANCISCO SOLONOI, THE DREADED BUCCANEER.



CHAPTER II.

'The lights are high on beacon and from bower,
And midst them Conrad seeks Medora's tower :
He looks in vain—'tis strange—and all remark,
Amid so many, hers alone is dark.
'Tis strange—of yore its welcome never failed,
Nor now, perchance, extinguished, only veiled.
With the first boat descends he for the shore,
And looks impatient on the lingering oar.
Oh ! for a wing beyond the falcon's flight,
To bear him like an arrow to that height !
With the first pause the resting rowers gave,
He waits not—looks not—leaps into the wave,
Strives through the surge—bestrides the beach—
 and high
Ascends the path familiar to his eye.
He reached his turret door—he paused—no sound
Broke from within—and all was night around.'

IT was three months after the departure of the pirate's ship, as recorded in our last chapter, that she once more re-appeared off the harbor from whence she had sailed.

It was night ; blackness above, darkness below, gloom all around, for a fearful storm was abroad ; but glad-hearted were the pirates ; their cruise had been successful. Joyful, too, was their chief, for he was near the home of his beloved, and he was returning to fulfil the promise which had depended upon his success ; to cheer her fond heart by forever retiring from the terrible life of a buccaneer.

We said that the night was fearful. The rushing clouds above obscured the stars, and the gale howled as it bore them along like

fiendish spirits on its sweeping wings. The sea rolled in huge, dark waves, which seemed madly to play each with the other : now chasing the flying ship, as if they would wrap her up in their huge embraces ; then flinging their white foam-flakes high over her strained and creaking hull. With a single scant and bellying sail, she drove on through the mad waters towards the rock-bound port. It was pitchy dark, but the lead which gave constant soundings, satisfied Solonois of his position and course, and ever and anon, as the vivid lightning would dart quiveringly forth from the black clouds, the rough outline of the hills ahead could be seen, and as each moment he neared them, each returning flash of light would make them more plainly visible.

Soon the vessel was off the narrow passage which led into the harbor, and here the pirate fired the signal gun which would inform those on shore of his return; but no answering beacon light was lit upon the rock to guide him through the narrow channel, or give him assurance of welcome.

'What, all sleeping?' muttered he, as he ordered another gun to be discharged to awaken the careless sentinels.

But still no light gleamed from the tall battlements, no sign of welcome, no sound of joy arose from the rocky fortress.

But the light of the storm-clouds, as at intervals it flashed and flickered along the sky, enabled the experienced pilot soon to enter and pass the narrow-channel, and in a few moments more his ship lay at her anchor in the still calm bay.

And yet no light could be seen or sound be heard from the rocky castle, the spot where he had left his bride, his loved and loving Medora. Oh, how cold, dark and ominous to his heart was that dreadful silence. As the red flashes of linked lightning gleamed athwart the hills, and lighted up for a moment the rugged back-ground, the rock and house could be seen, but no one occupied the sentinel's look-out tower. And yet a flag was streaming from the signal-staff, where flag was never hoisted in his absence, and, though the darkness might deceive him, Solonoi was almost sure that it was black.

Oh, who can describe the agony of suspense that wrung his heart in that wild moment! While the seamen lowered his boat, to bear him to the foot of the rock, he shouted her name again and again,

'Medora! Medora!' The rocks in echo sadly answered back her name.

In a few moments he stood upon the stairs which led up to his dwelling; hastily he ascended them, followed by the armed crew which had landed with him. He reached the top. The door of his dwelling stood widely open as if to receive him, and yet all therein was dark and silent as the tomb.

'Oh, God! Medora! Medora!' he cried,

as he entered the tenatnless dwelling. Echo alone answered, and again 'twas with her name.

'Ho! bring lights! This fearful mystery shall be resolved!' shouted he again, as he staggered and fell upon the couch where her form had used to rest, but which now was vacant.

The order was soon obeyed, and the ruddy glare of torches cast an unearthly light over the richly furnished apartments of the dwelling. Sick at heart and with shuddering form, the pirate chieftain glanced around him as the lights appeared. As if an adder had bitten him to the heart, sprung he from the couch whereon he had cast himself. It was red—red with blood! And here his wife was wont to rest.

'Oh, God, be merciful!' he groaned, as with eyes almost out-starting from their burning sockets, he gazed upon the dreadful stains, and then fell, a weak and helpless object of misery, upon the carpet, which also bore marks of death's last, fearful struggle.

Before his crew could restore their chief to consciousness, the light of day began to pale the east, and when he started again to his feet and looked around him, the soft rays of the rising sun stole in through the open casement by her bed-side, which looked as if the lattice had been dashed aside by her in the moment of peril to call to the sentinel for aid, an aid which the bloody stains that met his gaze but too plainly told had come too late.

While he gazed out of that lattice, his eye caught a glimpse of the flag which he had noted in the darkness as it flapped in the gale on the night before. *It was black*, even as the ebon clouds of night; even as the horror which froze the very fountains of his heart. But while he looked toward it, the glance of his eye fell upon the outstretched forms of some of the brave men whom he had left to guard and protect her. He rushed forth, perchance, with a thought that again he might see her form; but he saw scattered here and there as if they had fallen in a desperate struggle, the corsees of his brave crew

alone. And now seemed her fate even more horrible to his tortured heart than if he had gazed upon her corse, for what will not the imagination picture in such a moment?

The ground all around was stained with blood, and trampled as if by many feet, and the pirate knew that whoever the conquerors were, they had not escaped unharmed, though as their own dead had been borne away, it was impossible to know their loss.

'Oh, God!' he groaned again—'where—where art thou, Medora?'

But the distant waves which dashed against the everlasting rock, moaned out his only answer. Yet, while his eye wandered every where in the vain search for the form of her whom he loved, it met a paper, which with a blood-stained dagger was nailed to the staff wherefrom waved that awful flag.

He rushed to the spot, wrenched the dagger from the post, and when he glanced upon that paper he knew all.

It was in the hand-writing of *her* father, and faint grew his heart and sick his soul, while he read these words:

'Pirate! Slave! Blood alone can wash shame from the house of Larranaga! Would ye find her who has brought disgrace upon the proudest name in all the noble lineage of Spaiu? Go ask her from the sea, where with her babe, the cursed proof of her disgrace, she waits for you! This dagger which has tasted of the life-blood in the heart whose love you stole from an idolizing father, is left for you to use upon your own black heart!'

Slowly, calmly, without a word, or sigh, or groan, did the chieftain read that fearful scroll. Then he gazed long upon the golden-hilted dagger which with clotted blood upon its blade, had nailed the dreadful paper to the flag-staff.

As he raised his eyes from these and looked towards his crew, they shuddered and actually started back in affright, a change so fearful had been wrought in a few moments.

His eyes were blood-shot; his face pale as if the cold hand of death had been laid upon it; his lips were livid, and an expression so fiendish had gathered upon his face that even they, pirates, devils incarnate as they were, even they shuddered with horror.

Once again he glanced upward to the flag which waved its ebony folds above his head, then slowly sank down upon his knees amid the corpses of his fallen garrison, and as he pressed that blood-stained dagger to his lips, he breathed this fearful OATH:

'Blood for blood;—ay, for each drop of *her* precious blood, rivers shall flow in revenge! Death to the Spaniards! Oh, my Medora, thou shalt be avenged!'

Then turning to his men, and pointing to the flag above them, he cried, 'Haul down that death-flag and go nail it to my ship's mast-head; ay, *nail* it there, for never shall it cease to wave while I live. Now ye *shall* be pirates; ay, ye may drink blood and eat flesh if ye will, for your chieftain lives only for revenge!'

He returned to his lonely house, still grasping the dagger and fatal paper in his hand, while his crew obeyed his orders in regard to the flag, and though unbidden, gave the corpses of their fallen comrades earthly burial.

Solonois knew not how his little force had been surprised in his absence; the only information which he could gain, was in the paper which he had read, and in the desolating traces of the foe. He once more gazed upon the couch where she so oft had rested; once more his eye rested upon the guitar whose strings had given melodious answer to her gentle touch, as she sung to him of love; he saw the baubles and toys scattered around, which had been the playthings of his child, and though he groaned in the bitter agony of his heart, his eye shed not a tear, his lips uttered not a sound. His grief was tearless, speechless!

Then he wandered out upon the parapet, where last he had sat by her side, and prom-

ised after one more trip to quit the pirate's life forever. He gazed upon the stones as if the prints of her loved foot-steps were written there, and again he knelt upon the spot and renewed his terrible oath of blood. Then as he gazed upon the black banner which waved from his mast-head, his fierce eye brightened with a hellish glare, and he shouted—'Revenge! Medora! Death to the Spaniards!'

Then he called his crew around him and made them swear a fearful oath never to spare a Spaniard! Then choosing a strong

guard, he placed them under an officer whom he knew to be watchful and brave, and bidding them guard the fortress with their lives, till his return, he descended to his vessel, and soon with bellying sail she sped away from that spot to him now so desolate, her black flag streaming like a demon's wing upon the gale which swept her on.

The men whom he left, obeyed his orders in preparing the fortress for service, for well he knew that it would be, and earnestly did he wish it to become a very theatre of blood!

CHAPTER III.

'The witching-time of night is near—
Hark! 'tis the hollow midnight bell,
Whose echoes, fraught with solemn fear,
Far o'er the land and ocean swell.
The sentry, on his lonely post,
Starts, and bethinks him of a ghost;
Lists eager for the distant sound
Of comrades marching to the round,
And bends athwart the gloom his eye,
The glimmer of their arms to spy.'

IT was night—a clear, summer night, a few days after the date of our last chapter. A noble frigate lay at anchor in the harbor of Havana, which was unruffled and calm as the sky above, and full as bright, for the stars were all looking at themselves in that transparent mirror, winking and quivering as if they were trying to jump up and come down to meet each other at the half-way house. The moon, which had just entered upon her path of glory, like a fashionable belle coming late into a ball-room, as its light fell against the tall spars and dark, slender cordage of the frigate, painted beautiful shapes and shadows on the water beyond, so that the watchful sentinels, as they gazed

abroad from over their gun-pierced bulwarks, might see what a beauty was the craft in which they sailed.

And nearer to the shore, the shades were thicker and more dark, for trees, rocks and houses were less penetrable to Miss Diana's eye-sight, than slender rigging and tapering spars. On the shore all was still and calm as the slumbers of a young babe upon its mother's bosom. The people seemed all asleep, except here and there a drowsy sentinel, who, as he walked along the unpeopled streets, would ever and anon cry his watchword—'Viva la España!'—to prove that both he and Spain were yet alive. His sonorous voice would for a moment echo along the

street, and while these rolled along he would pause to listen to a similar cry from the other guardians of the town's quiet, and again all would be still.

The zephyrs, forgetting their usual duty of fanning with their perfume-laden wings, the love-warmed brows of dreaming maidens, had gone to sleep and stole not in through the lattices or opened casements; the leaves and flowers had rest, and without a motion lay and drank the gentle dew, as some lazy toper reclined on his back, and with a silver tube, or wheaten straw, imbibes a julep which to him is nectar incomparable.

Beyond the still waters of the harbor, and just clear of the long shadows of the frigate, loomed up the lofty, cliff-like walls of the Moro castle, and where the black-mouthed cannon peeped downwards from the frowning battlements, the moonlight fell on the gleaming bayonets and accoutrements of sentinels, who there kept vigil over land and sea, for from that lofty point the vision hath a lengthened range, both oceanward and overland.

On the frigate's deck there was but a slim watch kept, for a safer and better fortified harbor belonged not to Spain. A lieutenant paced the starboard side of the quarter-deck, with regular and measured step, his arms folded and his head bent down as if his brain was overloaded either with thought or sleepiness. He seemed to feel secure and careless, for probably having found his sword heavy or uncomfortable as it dangled from its belt, he had unbuckled and deposited it near the gangway, leaning it against the breech of one of the 24 pounder carronades, which there rested on its carriage.

On the other side of the quarter-deck was a wee-bit of a middy, but the youngster had seated himself on a carronade slide, and if one might judge from his placid countenance, his closed eyes and open mouth, as also by the regular rise and fall of his young breast, the little rascal had gone to sleep on his post, the laws probably not being in their service so severe as in others of modern and more democratic rule.

A single sentinel stood upon the high bow of the vessel, leaning against the fore-stay, and if he was not asleep, he was like a good actor employed to *do* the heavy business.

While all this was as we so briefly have described, four large barges and one small, light canoe, had been cautiously advancing along the harbor, close in shore, where they were completely hidden from observation in the dense shadows of the high bank. With muffled oars they had noiselessly gained a point nearly opposite the frigate, and here they paused, there being some three hundred yards of clear, moonlit water between them and the vessel. The pause was apparently for consultation, for after a moment the barges hauled close in to the shore, while the canoe kept on up the harbor, but after rowing a short distance, it pushed boldly out from the shore into the light, and now headed down toward the frigate, while the other boats remained in the shadow opposite to her.

There were two persons in the canoe, one, apparently, by his dress and appearance, an old fisherman; the other, from his looks and dress, might have been his son, for he was young and also appeared to be a disciple of the net. Unobserved by the sleeping sentinel, the canoe was permitted to drift down athwart the hawse of the ship, and soon she lay in the shadow of the vessel's lofty hull, and a line had fastened her to the iron bobstay under her cut-water. Then the elder of the two boatmen cautiously clambered up to the edge of the bulwark, and without being observed himself, carefully scanned and noted the situation of affairs. His keen eye detected the sleeping sentinel, the drowsy and careless officer, and the slumbering mid-dy; he even saw where the negligent lieutenant had left his sword.

Long and calmly he gazed, seeming to determine upon some plan of action, then cautiously descended again to the canoe.

'Bernardo!' said he, in a low whisper to his comrade—'take your dagger between your teeth and mount to the deck, keeping close and quiet, until you see me act; then,

there is a sleeping sentinel on the fore-castle above us; he must not wake again! Do you understand me?

The man laid his hand upon his dagger and bowed an affirmative. 'The other continued,

'As soon as you gain a footing, I shall drop astern and get aboard by the carved work and netting of the quarter-deck galleries, where I can more easily reach the officer of the deck. When you see me strike him, then attend to the sentinel and the ship is our own—but be silent, steady, and when you strike, let your blow be sure and home!'

The man again betokened his readiness, and passing from the boat, commenced carefully ascending as his comrade had done.

The latter now loosened the boat and in a moment she had drifted down to the quarter of the vessel, and her occupant had let her pass on as he stepped out upon the bow frame, which in those days surrounded the quarter galleries of ships. But as he did so, the drawn sword which he held in his hand fell from his grasp with a sudden plunge in the water.

'Curse on my carelessness!' muttered the man, as he sprang hastily up the side, fearing that the noise had startled the officer, but it had not. He kept along in his quiet and dream pace, as if there were no enemies to him in all the world.

The other cautiously crept along outside the bulwarks till he got abreast of the main-mast and in its shadow. Here he paused and drew a small dagger from a belt, wherein also rested a brace of long-barrelled pistols, and then as the officer turned his back to walk towards the taffrail, he sprang lightly over the bulwarks, and before the former had turned to come back, he was hidden behind the mast. Then as the officer on his usual round approached him, the concealed seemed to measure the distance between them, and thrice he permitted the officer to go and come, and yet moved not towards him. At last, after having seen that his comrade stood close beside the sleeping sentinel, at the instant

when the officer slowly wheeled toward his vessel's stern, the foe, with a single light bound, sprang to his side, and with the speed of light was the uplifted dagger buried to the very hilt in the unfortunate man's heart. Without a word or even a groan he sunk to the deck like a flower wilted in an instant by a bolt of lightning, and the sound of a blow, a groan, and a heavy fall, forward, proved how well the orders of the other had been obeyed.

The midshipman, half awakened by the sound of the falling men, drowsily raised his little hand and passed it across his smooth face, and over the long silken lashes that jet-tily fringed his closed eyes, and then again his hands relaxed, his arms fell carelessly upon his heaving bosom, and his slumber seemed as quiet as before.

The assassin whose dagger had pierced the officer's heart, now approached the sleeping boy, and as he bent down over him, and marked the placid record of innocence which was written on his sweet face, the man trembled; ay, his tall, strong form quivered with excitement, and a gleam of pity seemed to steal like sunlight upon a cloud, over his stern, dark visage, but dark again grew his brow, and heavier his frown, as he muttered,

'He is a Spaniard!' and then, as his closed teeth ground like files together, he raised the dagger above the spot where in the clear moonlight he could see the poor lad's vesture rise and fall above the quiet beatings of his heart, and again the crimsoned steel was buried to its hilt. One slight quiver, one gasp, and a convulsive clenching of those small, white hands, and then glaring, opened, but glazed and lustreless eyes, told how speedy had been death's work again. The boy was dead, but his posture was unchanged; he still lay there as if he slept, but paler grew his cheek, while the red, warm blood trickled in a small, bright stream down his snowy bosom to the deck, which was now alone occupied by the two assassins:

The elder arose from the side of the murdered boy, and hastily passed from the corse

to the side of the vessel next to the land, where drawing a silver tube from his belt, he blew a long, shrill whistle, which was immediately answered from shore-ward, and the next instant the four barges rowed swiftly, yet silently towards the frigate, and soon were alongside of her. They *must* have been seen by the sentinel on the Moro; yet, strange as it was, no alarm was given; perchance the latter dreamed not of the possibility of their being foes.

In a few moments one hundred armed and desperate men had mounted the frigate's deck, and as they were perfectly silent, and the sentinels were slain, not one of the frigate's sleeping crew knew how near to them was a merciless foe.

As they stood upon the deck waiting for orders, he who had first boarded the vessel passed along their lines, and in a whisper gave to each his commands. To one party he assigned the cabins, to others other portions of the ship, and he bade all use the dagger, and on no account to fire a pistol, for he knew that if an alarm was given, escape from under the guns of the fort, or from the boats of the other men-of-war in port, would be impossible. Ever and anon, as he walked along that line, he would hiss forth with more than human venom:

'Strike home! Spare not one,—death to the Spaniards!'

2

All was arranged, and like a band of dark spirits, these men followed their leader below. Thence soon arose a confused murmur like the muttering of a distant storm; suppressed moans, and heavy blows could have been heard, and a stifled curse, or half-uttered scream of pain broke upon the stillness of the night, but soon even these sounds were hushed. Oh, God, how awful was the silence which followed, even as if death had rested from a surfeit!

Then, one by one, with stained and reeking hands, weapons from which the clotted blood dropped in huge lumps, those men, or devils in human guise, came up from below, and as quietly as they had come, returned into the boats which were moored alongside.

Their leader paused upon the deck, and drew from his bosom a paper upon which he looked, and he groaned in agony as he gazed upon it. Then dipping his dagger's point in a little pool of blood which had trickled from the young boy's heart, he wrote some words upon a paper, below a record already written there, and taking a dagger from the belt of the dead midshipman, he with it nailed the paper to the frigate's mast, and then followed his crew to their boats.

They silently pushed from the vessel, soon gained the shadow of the land, and ere long had disappeared in the direction whence they had come.

CHAPTER IV.

Pale grew the Baron, and faintly said,
As he heaved his breath with pain—
'From such a feast as there was spread,
Do any return again?
Do the hollow grave and the whelming wave
Give up their dead again?
Doth the surgy waste waft e'er its breast
The spirits of the slain!'

SUDDENLY was Don Enrico Laranaga, the governor, aroused from his slumbers on the morning succeeding the night of our last chapter.

'What meaneth this unceremonious intrusion?' asked he, angrily, of the officer who had entered his apartment at an hour so unusually early.

'The pirates! your excellency, the pirates!' hurriedly exclaimed the intruder, at the same time holding a blood-stained paper towards the governor.

'The pirates—what of them? By your excitement I should think you had been amongst them! What paper is that upon which you gaze with such cowardly horror? Give it hither!'

The officer obeyed. For a moment the governor gazed upon it, then he, too, turned pale with horror.

'It is the scroll I left upon the pirate's flag staff; but here are more words upon it, and they, too, are written in blood!' cried he, and again he read aloud the following record:

'One drop in the river of revenge; this is the first breath of the hurricane that shall follow! If ye love blood, drink of it; if ye would have more, follow *Solomais* to the blue water, where he waits to destroy Spaniards!'

There was no more written upon the paper. The Governor turned still more pale as he asked:

'Whence comes this paper? Explain!'

'From the mast of the frigate *Salvadora*, where it was nailed with a dagger, and—'

'A dagger—this blood?' Where were the sentinels? what kind of watch and ward is this they keep, to let a pirate enter our harbors by night and mount our very decks?'

'They were slain, your excellency!'

'Who—the pirates?'

'No your excellency, but every soul on board the frigate, this paper alone being left to tell how and by whom the dreadful work was done!'

'Now by the name of my fathers, I know that thou liest! A frigate's crew *all* murdered—none escaped?' exclaimed the almost maddened governor.

'By mine honor, I speak truly!' said the officer, 'and if you doubt my words, go see, as I have, your frigate's bloody decks, go see a brave and lifeless crew weltering in their blood—if that paper and his name will not suffice!'

'Was no harm given? And none of the pirates slain? Surely Spaniards have not died without resistance!'

'Alas, your excellency, they must have been surprised! We can see no trace of any injury received by the pirates, and most of our men were murdered in their beds, without a weapon in their hands!'

'Strange—strange!' muttered the governor, shuddering as he again glanced at the blood-stained paper in his hand, and then his eye brightened.

'He—Solonoi, says if we want more blood, we must follow him to blue water! By the name of my fathers if he will but wait till I can send for him, he shall have his will! How many vessels of war are there in port?'

'Two barks and the frigate, which the pirates did no harm unto, save in the destruction of her crew!' answered the officer.

'Let orders be given to fit them for sea and service immediately!' Let a new crew be placed aboard the frigate, and bid the Admiral of the port hasten to my side!'

The officer bowed and retired, and the governor remained in sad soliloquy,

'Strange, very strange, that they could have been surprised and slain without a blow. Bold and desperate indeed is he who would thus dare a peril so great for revenge alone! I thought the blow I had given would have crushed him; but he must fall, else my own life is not safe! Oh, why did I ever permit his youth and courage to so please me, as to let him learn the arts and ways of gentlemen, and the use of arms? Fool—fool that I was! I have been repaid for my kindness!'

In a short time the Admiral of the port entered in obedience to the governor's wish.

'Think you that it is possible to overtake the pirate ere he can gain his island for-

ress?' asked the governor, as the Admiral saluted him.

'If a vessel which is standing down the coast towards Mariel, with a black flag at her mast-head, under easy sail, is the pirate, as I am inclined to believe, she is willing to be overtaken, and cares not much for flight!' answered the Admiral.

'Doth she wear a black flag?'

'She does, and at sunrise was not far to leeward of the port. They certainly were her boats which boarded and surprised the *Salvadora* last night, and—'

'Admiral!' said Larranaga, with wild energy, 'that vessel must be taken, even if it cost a thousand lives! If it is possible, let the fiend who commands her be taken alive, for I have a fate in store for him, one which would make death in comparison, a blessing!'

'Your orders shall be obeyed!' was the firm, brief answer of the Admiral, who seemed to be one that could be depended on.

'How soon can you sail?' again asked the governor.

'By sunset.'

'With what force?'

'The frigate, two barks, and if necessary, several gun-boats; but if I can only get alongside of her in the frigate, I'll not ask other aid. I have lost friends to revenge, as well as my duty to do. My poor boy, my only son, was slain in cold blood on board that frigate last night, and I would not be a man, if I could not fight his murderers while my eyes were resting, on the deck stained with the life-blood of his pure young heart.'

'You shall be revenged, Admiral, and so shall the insulted banner of our country! Follow that fiend on to the death, for he nor any of his crew shall ever have mercy at my hands; no, not were their proffered ransoms more than a kingdom's wealth!—but yet, spare his life, if ye can capture him, for I have one sight to show him ere he dies, which will make his one death worse than a thousand!'

'Your will shall be obeyed, if possible. I shall at once despatch the two barks to keep

watch upon him, and ere sunset shall follow in the frigate.'

'You say that he is still in sight?'

'Yes, your excellency, he is standing down under the heights of Mariel, with very scant sail set, neither fearing nor caring for pursuit.'

'Well, haste ye to follow him, brave Admiral, and—but I need not say more to one

whose bravery and experience is so well known as yours!'

'I thank your excellency for the compliment, and I hope that both my sense of duty and a wish to revenge my poor boy, will enable me to show myself worthy of your confidence!' and the Admiral, as he thus spoke, hastened forth to his duty.

CHAPTER V.

'The Angel of destruction from on high
Rushed with red wing that blazed along the sky,
Stalk'd on the wave with garment dyed in blood,
And lashed the billows of the sounding flood.
Death heard his voice; and as he towered in air,
Shook arrowy lightnings from his meteor hair.
A wild confusion of uncertain sound,
Loud shouts and shrieks of horror ring around;
The groan of anguish, and the brazen roar,
And the slow wave that heaved the dead on shore:
And all confused came floating on the sight,
Thro' transitory flames of lurid light;
Save where, aloft, 'mid either navy raised,
Tower'd a vast wreck, that far o'er ocean blazed,
Like Etna, pouring from the sea-girt height,
A fiery torrent thro' the storm of night.
There frenzy's thrilling outcry smote the ear,
And visions flash'd that struck the brave with fear.
Thro' the torn decks, rent sides, and shiver'd sails
As rushed the expanding flame before the gales,
Pale swarms were seen, that dash'd in wild dismay
Thro' bursting fires, that closed around their way,
Some on the masts and blazing cordage hung,
Or headlong plunged the crowned waves among!'

A GAIN it was night; still, silent, beautiful night! The inhabitants of Mariel, a little town upon the sea-coast about thirty miles from Havana, were peacefully slumbering, or ought to have been, for it was near the hour of dawn when mortals ever sleep the soundest, and theirs was a quiet little place, whose inhabitants were lazy, good-natured people; such as generally

go to bed early, sleep soundly, snore loudly, and get up late.

But they were not allowed to rest undisturbed all this night, for ere the dawn of day the sound of a heavy cannonading in their immediate vicinity aroused them from their dreams, and they hurried forth from their couches to know whence came and what meant these ominous thunderings of war.

A motley set were they who gathered upon the cliff which fronted toward their little harbor and gazed out seaward, where by the red flashes of the guns they knew that vessels were engaged in combat, although why they fought, or of what nation they were, was still unknown to the villagers. We said that they were a motley set. There were white, black, and yellow, in color; without clothes, well clothed, half-dressed, and ragged ones; poor, rich, mechanics, fishermen and village grandees, to say nothing of the pretty girls and ancient maidens who took advantage of the time and occasion to appear in 'an interesting *neglige*,' as also a goodly gang of barefooted little ones among this motley crowd, of both sexes; all sorts, sizes, colors and conditions.

And besides these, there was a whole corporal's guard of soldiers, consisting of six men besides the corporal, who with his sabre as long as himself, and with a face hidden in

beard and moustache, looks as if he were at least half a dozen in himself. This guard formed the police of the village, and were now turned out in military array by their brave commander, who formed them in a line upon the extreme verge of the cliff, and after promptly giving the order:

'Guard! right dress!' (some of them were dressed in any way but right, for they had turned out in a hurry,) 'Order arms! Stand at ease!' he, with the rest awaited for daylight to come and lift the veil of darkness from the mystery, standing right *uneasily*, in spite of his 'orders' to the contrary.

At last, much to their relief, the rosy smile of dawn began to gather about the corners of the sky-and-water lips in the east, and soon it deepened into a broad grin as the red sun came sleepily up out of the water, and then the people could note the combatants.

There were three vessels engaged; one of them, a ship from whose mast-head floated a flag far blacker than the night which had so lately fled from the sunlight; the other twain were barks, quite as large as the ship, both of these wearing the national colors of Spain.

They were all hove to, about three miles from the mouth of the harbor, peppering away at each other as if the sport was exceedingly agreeable. The pirate especially was firing with a calm deliberation which told with fearful effect upon his opponents. After each broad-side, he would wait until the smoke had cleared away so as to permit his gunners again to make a sure and deadly aim, and then his crashing shot would tell its tale upon their spars and hulls. The barks were literally torn to pieces aloft, their masts and sails a complete wreck, and their hulls now suffered the more, that daylight enabled a steadier and more certain aim. But in a sail which was bearing down towards them, they knew they had a reinforcement; therefore they continued the battle as vigorously as they could in their crippled condition.

Meantime the citizens of Mariel gazed listlessly upon the battle, some quietly smoking their cigars, others sending their servants for their morning's coffee, and others still, betting upon the time it would occupy to capture the pirate, and how many would be killed in the battle. Amongst these betters the corporal was very conspicuous; he betting that the pirates would whip the barks, be run ashore by the frigate, and that he would end the battle with his guard. He felt very indignant when several offered to take his bet up at an odds of fifty to one, but expressed his willingness to bet *even*.

When Solonois saw the rapidity with which the frigate bore down upon him, he knew that he must speedily get rid of the barks, or his hands would be too full of business for him to manage. He therefore bade his gunners to double shot his guns with canister, and not to fire again until his orders were given. He had the weather-gage of the barks, and he now bore down towards them, as if to board them. Their crews clustered along the shattered bulwarks and in the rigging, ready to repel the enemy, and as the pirate swept on towards them, each heart beat high with anxiety for the result. But when the pirate's ship had got close on board, she suddenly luffed up in the wind, and before a man could move to shelter himself, a fearful shower of shot was thrown in upon the Spaniards, doing dreadful havoc among their closely crowded ranks. Then as she ranged ahead of them, she bore down across their bows and poured in, as she came up on the other tack, having 'worn ship,' her other broadside, which so added to their confusion that the two barks fell afoul of each other, and then for a moment the scene was awful. The two vessels had been so enveloped in smoke that each thought the other was the pirate, and before the mistake was discovered had each poured into the other a most murderous broadside, while the muzzles of their guns almost met.

But as the dark hull of the pirate swept up through the cloud of smoke, and from her

deck a hundred half-naked, yelling demons sprung aboard, the survivors of the barks found out their fatal error.

At the head of the pirates was one with glaring eyes, his face begrimed with smoke and powder, which as it mingled with his sweat and blood, added to the horror of his appearance, and as at every sweeping blow of his heavy sabre a foe fell before him, his deep shout, 'Death to the Spaniards!' rolled like the howl of an unchained demon through the air, striking terror to the hearts of his enemies.

Short indeed was the strife after the pirates had boarded the barks. The few who had survived those dreadful broad-sides fled below hatches, shouting for mercy; but as well might they have asked in hell for water from the cooling fountain, as to have sought for mercy at the hands of Solonois.

'Death! Death to the Spaniards!' was his only cry. When, as the smoke cleared away, he saw that all of his foes had fled below, and that he had full possession of both barks, he ordered the hatches battened down, all ways of egress to be stopped up, and all the boats destroyed, and then set fire to both the barks, as he shoved his own vessel clear of danger. Oh, God, it was awful to hear the maddening shrieks of those who from below could listen to the crackling flames, and knew that they had been spared from the pirate's sword only to die by fire! Yet their shrieks and groans were as food to the soul of Solonois, the soul which so thirsted for revenge. 'Death to the Spaniards!' he shouted, as he saw the red flames rush over the hulls and up the rigging of the doomed vessels. And once again, when he saw that though the frigate was pressing all her canvass to reach them, she could not arrive in time to save or succor, he laughed, as devils only laugh, and bade his crew prepare for another fight.

And now they murmured, for they had lost many men, no booty could be gained by fighting men of war, their ammunition was almost all expended, and as their vessel was

a swift sailer, they deemed it policy to escape.

Black was the flag which waved above their heads, but darker was their leader's frown. Red had been the flashings of their cannon, yet redder was the gleam of anger in his eye as he heard their murmurs.

'Your oaths!' he cried: 'Have ye forgotten? Ye shall fight for *me* to-day, and if ye will seek for plunder, ye shall, on the morrow, and then *I* will fight for *you*!'

'We are out of powder!' cried one.

'Is there not steel in your hand?' asked the stern chief.

'Ay, and powder enough for one more broad-side!' answered one of the gunners, and then with a cheer, once more the pirate crew pledged themselves to stand by their leader.

He now carefully scanned the approaching vessel with his glass, and a shade of care seemed to steal across his countenance as he saw her crowded decks, and knew that her crew of fresh, untired men out-doubled his.

He looked toward the man who had remarked that there was powder enough for another broad-side.

'Bernardo, come hither,' said he.

The man obeyed, and the chief continued:

'Have you ever been into that little port under our lee?'

'Yes, sir, often; I used to fish on the reefs to starboard of that little island in the mouth of it.'

'Can you take the helm and run us in safely through the starboard channel and out of the larboard, again, if it is necessary?'

The man glanced up at the flag to see how the wind tended, then looked toward the bay as if to calculate whether the ship could luff out of the little harbor when once in, and then firmly answered:

'Yes, sir, there's room and water for her if she's well steered; but if a single changeable flaw strikes her when she's in that narrow channel, she'll go ashore!'

'Take the helm—I've a trick for that frigate to swallow! Could she follow us through the channel?'

'She *could*, but not one pilot in a thousand can take her through. The channel is not ten feet wider than her beam!'

'It is well—take the helm and obey my orders!' said the chief.

Then turning to the other gunners, he bade them put a double charge in their *lar-board* guns, and to leave the others as they were. Then he hove to his vessel to wait for the coming frigate, and watched the burning barks, which with their miserable crews were now shrouded in smoke and flames.

During all this time his proceedings had been watched with growing interest by the people on shore, and when they saw the capture of the barks, and the fearful doom of their crews, their sympathies would have driven them to put forth in boats to the relief of their countrymen, but the pirate with that fearful flag lay between them, and they deemed it madness to attempt succor when success would have been hopeless.

Even the corporal had in the wild excitement forgotten his bet, which was partly won, but as when the frigate drew nearly within gun-shot of the pirate, the latter made sail and began to stand in towards the harbor, he remembered it, and in great glee reminded those with whom he had wagered, of his terms. We will now give the reader a glimpse of the shape of Mariel harbor, that they may understandingly observe the succeeding manœuvres.

The harbor was formed by a semi-circular nook in the coast, and a high rocky island which fronted it, breaking off the surge of the sea from the outside; but it was too small to afford much room for anchorage. A narrow path wound down the cliff to a flat rock which formed its only landing place, a spot whereon ten or twelve men only could find room to stand, and to this rock were moored the few fishing boats that supplied their market. The path up the hill was steep and narrow, and well might the corporal's scanty guard defend it if necessary, and by it, was the only passage to the village from seaward. There was a channel which led en-

tirely around the inside of the island, but on the southern side, it was extremely narrow, especially at its mouth, where our reefs at either side the breakers rolled heavily.

At the moment when the pirate commenced setting sail, and headed off toward the harbor, the dreadful tragedy of the doomed barks came to a close. With an explosion which even shook the solid cliffs of Mariel, they both blew up at the same instant, the fire having reached their magazines, and then nothing but scattered spars and riven planks, smouldering on the darkened waters, was left of them.

Wild and loud rung the shouts of the pirates when they saw this: deep and sad were the expressions of the sympathizing Spaniards on shore, and when they saw the noble frigate dashing down under full sail toward the pirate, like an eagle on a wounded vulture, they shouted in their glee, for they deemed the capture of the latter inevitable.

When Solonois saw that the frigate had got within gun-shot, he bade his helmsman run the vessel off before the wind, and squaring his yards, steered directly in toward the harbor.

Then indeed, it seemed that he intended to run his vessel ashore, and escape with his crew to the mountains, and many a peaceably disposed citizen turned pale as he glanced at the approaching vessel.

The corporal, however, seemed to think that he should win his bet, and as the ship bore down, hastily posted his party where their fire would rake the path by which the pirates must ascend if they landed, and called upon all the citizens who loved their king and panted for glory, to place themselves under his command.

The people on the cliff were in a terrible hubbub. Some rushed homeward for arms and forgot to return; others, whose curiosity conquered their fear, remained on the cliff and watched the vessels.

The pirate bore steadily down toward the harbor, but the frigate was rapidly gaining on her, and now kept up from her bow-

chasers a rapid fire, which, however, did the ship no damage.

The latter soon reached the channel's mouth on the north side of the island, and then how exulting was the cheer which rose from the frigate's crew which was following close in her wake, for they thought their foe entrapped, having observed that the soldiers and inhabitants on shore were prepared to oppose their landing.

And anxious, too, was the glance which the pirate crew cast upon their leader as their ship dashed into the narrow passage to the northward of the island, but they were reassured when they saw his proud and haughty look of calmness as he glanced back at the frigate and then forward at the crowd which clustered on the cliff above.

'Be steady now with your helm, Bernardo, and stand by to luff her out through the channel, as I brace in the yards!' said he to the helmsman, in low, calm tones; then to the crew he added:

'Stand to the lee braces, men!' and at once they saw what he intended.

Great was the astonishment of the Spanish corporal on shore, when he saw the pirate-ship sweep swiftly past the anchorage and landing place, and, as steered by the experienced pilot, and managed with consummate skill, she luffed up into the narrow passage which led out to sea on the south side of the island, a mingled murmur of admiration and disappointment broke from the people upon the cliff, who had gazed with shuddering silence down upon the dark and blood-stained decks of the ship, as she passed almost beneath them.

Almost breathlessly they watched her as

she gradually came to the wind and threaded her way out of the narrow channel, but loud were their cheers when the beautiful frigate, under a cloud of canvass, swept by in chase, following the same perilous course.

At the instant when the pirate had cleared the channel and gained the open sea, he had luffed up into the wind's eye and hove his main top-sail aback, and now he lay with all of his heavily loaded broadside bearing directly upon the frigate as she steered along through the narrow and difficult channel.

Calmly he bade his gunners sight their pieces, and at the instant when she reached the narrowest part of the channel, he gave the order, and with a shock that made his own ship reel upon the waters, his double-charged broadside was poured into the frigate.

For an instant his view was obscured by the smoke-cloud which rose, but as it cleared away, triumphant was the shout of the pirates, for they witnessed the complete success of their commander's manœuvre.

The frigate was ashore on the reef; for that fearful fire had swept her deck, killed her helmsman, and wrought a confusion which had altered her course, and now the pirate was safe from pursuit.

'Oh, that I had more powder!' cried the chief, as he gazed upon the helpless frigate, for it would then have been easy for him to have utterly destroyed her. However, as this was not now in his power, he filled away and shaped his course for his island rendezvous, while he left the Spanish frigate to bilge upon the reefs of Mariel, or get off as best she might.

CHAPTER VI.

'The bark thou saw'st yon summer morn,
So gaily part from Cuba's bay,
My eye beheld her dashed and torn,
Far on the rocky Colonay.'

IT was night, the night following the day of blood which occupied our last chapter; and though the midnight hour was past, Don Enrico, the governor, paced his chamber, waiting to hear of the issue of the battle, for he had distinctly heard the cannonading, and waited with anxiety to know the result.

'It would be impossible for the pirate to escape from so large a force!' muttered the governor, as he strode to and fro; and when the moment after the Admiral was announced, his inquiry was:

'Where is your prisoner? I hope *he*, the pirate slave, is not killed!'

'No, your excellency, nor seems it likely that he will be soon!' answered the Admiral, who was pale with fatigue and excitement, for he had ridden from Mariel at all speed, to send boats to try to warp his frigate off the rocks where she still lay aground.

'*Not likely to be!* Has he escaped?'

'Yes, sir, after sending the two barks to Davy Jones' locker, and running my frigate ashore, where she now is, while he has gone Heaven only knows where!'

Dark with anger grew Don Enrico's face,

as he heard this news, and for a moment paced to and fro in his room, the while biting his lips, till all unconsciously the blood was streaming down his chin and trickling upon the snowy ruffles of his linen.

'Is *he* backed by all the fiends of hell, or have Spaniards turned cowards of late?' shouted he, as he abruptly paused in front of the Admiral.

'The first may be the case, but the latter cannot be, since not a man of all those who sailed this morning in the barks is alive, and half of mine own crew are as bad off as the helpless vessel, and one third of the remainder are dead!'

'Fearful indeed hath been that man's revenge! How many men has he slain for us in these different attacks?'

'Over four hundred!' sadly answered the Admiral.

'And I slew but twelve for him; oh, how dreadfully has he been revenged, and yet he lives to do more wholesale murder! Admiral, this fiend must be followed to his haunts, and if it requires all the force of the Spanish navy to do it, he must be taken, and his horde exterminated—but again I say, when

you meet him, slay him not; spare him for a fate of my own invention—a fate which laughs death to scorn, so much is it superior in torture!”

‘It will require much preparation to fit an expedition to cope with one so terrible, in his own fortresses.’

‘I care not for time, labor or expense, so that in this my will is obeyed! You sir Admiral, have been once foiled—try again, and never dare to enter my presence without *him* or his head!’

The officer bowed and left the apartment, for he was worn down with the excitement and fatigue of the day and humbled by his lack of success.

For a time Don Enrico paced to and fro along the carpet, muttering incoherently, but paused as a sudden thought seemed to enter his mind, and then rung a bell which lay upon his writing table.

A servant in livery entered, and in silence awaited his orders.

‘Carlos, send Elizabetta hither to me, and bid her be *hasty*!’ sternly said the governor.

Without a word the man departed to obey. In a few moments a middle aged serving woman appeared, and as she entered, spoke:

‘Your excellency sent for me?’

‘Yes, Elizabetta! How fares the child?’

‘He is better, your excellency, and is now sure to recover; and if he was allowed his mother’s—’

‘Hush, woman, and name *her* not, or I’ll see where you are!’ shouted he, angrily, interrupting her as she had concluded her remark.

‘Pardon me, your excellency, I only meant to say—’

‘Silence! Bring *it*, the child, hither!’ again cried the other.

‘It is sleeping now, your excellency!’

‘I care not, bring it hither!’

The woman left the apartment, but soon returned bringing an infant in her arms. It was asleep. Its size and looks might denote it to be twelve or thirteen months old. It was pale as a lily, and upon its right cheek

a deep red scar in the shape of a crescent, or half moon, was plainly visible, as if from a recent and dangerous wound. Its hair was jetty black, and in short glossy curls clustered above its pale brow; its little lips were pale, and its eyelids closed upon a cheek entirely bloodless in appearance. Its hands were crossed on its bosom, which rose and fell with its quick, feverish breathings. It looked like a miniature of Innocence; but as he gazed upon it, the expression of Don Enrico’s face was that of cold and withering hate.

‘It is like *him*!’ he muttered; ‘oh boy, boy! were it not that I have reserved thee to aid me in a higher, dearer revenge, I would now send thee to him—thy father, in a shroud—but no, thou shalt live to be *his* curse!’

And then as he saw an expression of pity cross the countenance of the nurse, with a frowning brow and angered tone, he turned to her:

‘Elizabetta! You alone know the secret of this boy’s birth! All the rest deem that he had died of the wound received when I cast him down the rock as I tore him from his mother’s arms! If you would live, keep this secret as silent as the tomb you shall fill, if ever it is divulged!’

‘I will—I will, your excellency!’ exclaimed the servant, shuddering, as she noted his dark and fierce look, and then as if fearful of offence, yet yearning to have some suspense relieved, she asked, in a trembling tone:

‘Pardon me, your excellency, but do tell me if my poor lady lives, if yet—’

‘Silence! dare but again to name *her*, and were you my mother you should die! You know too much, now—begone, and beware!’ shouted he, in tones that made her tremble, as she obeyed his orders and left the apartment, striving to hush the child, which had been awakened by his tones of thunder.

‘Curse the brat, he will be heard—strange, if ye cannot otherwise silence him!’ shouted the governor, but the nurse and child were gone, and again all was silent.

CHAPTER VII.

'The fires blazed bright till deep midnight,
And the guests sat in the hall,
And Francisco the brave, the king of the wave,
Was the merriest of them all.'

GLAD were the shouts of welcome which greeted Solonois, as once more he cast anchor before his rocky fortress, and he was agreeably surprised to find his small garrison increased by near two hundred fresh and well armed men, who had been led thither by the fame of his desperate courage and boldness, and wished to serve under him.

They added two fine vessels to his own, and as he looked from the ramparts of his fort upon his fleet, and saw that he had between three and four hundred men who were ready to do his will, he shouted with fiendish exultation: '*Death to the Spaniards!*' and while the deep echoes of his trumpet-like voice rolled from crag to crag among the hills, his crew took up the shout, and hoarsely answered, '*Death to the Spaniards!*'

That night all the pirates were mustered at a feast given by their captain, who seldom joined them in their revels; but now he seemed to desire to drown sad memories in dissipation, and gave full scope to the wild debaucheries of the wine-cup.

Loud were the cheers of the pirates as they filled a brimming bumper to his health, and louder still were their shouts, when as

he returned their pledge, he bade them prepare for another cruise.

'Ye shall revel in gold!' he cried—'wine shall be as water to ye, but to gain these ye shall swim in blood! For you I seek riches; for myself revenge! '*Death to the Spaniards!*'

'Death to the Spaniards! Life to Solonois, the bravest of the buccaneers!' was their answering shout.

'Where strike we the first blow, captain?' asked Bernardo, who since his steadiness and gallantry at the pass of Mariel, had been advanced next to the chief in command.

'There is a village on the south of Cuba, where dwell several rich merchants, where also is a wealthy church. Provisions and wine are plenty there also, and 'tis a quiet place, where we would be least expected! What think you of a descent upon Cayos?'

'It would well repay the venture,' answered the other.

'I give the band one week for rest and preparation; meantime, let our fastest petiagua be manned with four or five trusty men, disguised as fishermen, and let her be sent to Havana to gather news. You alone can best do this, Bernardo; go in command and find

out the plans of the governor. My next descent shall be nearer to his own palace than will please him !”

“It will be but fair play and courtesy to return his visit !” responded the other, and then added, “I will hasten to obey your orders !”

“Do so, good Bernardo, and I will here await your return, for you shall share in the danger and profit of our next expedition !”

“Thanks, noble captain, your kindness shall not be forgotten, when my sword can aid you !”

“Enough, Bernardo, I have already proved you, but I must now leave you and your mates to their feast, for I have much to think of and arrange. Farewell till you return !”

The chieftain retired to the privacy of an inner apartment, while Bernardo, choosing his boat’s crew, departed upon his voyage of espial. The rest of the buccaneers kept up the revel until late on that night, or rather early in the morning hours could be heard the sounds of shouting, laughter, ringing glasses and lively chorusses.

* * * * *

It was one week later. The three piratical vessels lay at their anchors in the beautiful bay, apparently all ready for sea, for their sails were bent, their light-yards crossed, &c. From the mast-head of each the black flag which Solonois had adopted, waved lazily and gloomily out upon the breeze. The crews were listlessly passing about the decks, some gazing over the low bulwarks of the vessel into the water, so bright and clear that it reflected as a mirror their rough and savage faces ; others cleaning and examining their weapons ; all apparently impatient for something to do.

The pirate chief was pacing to and fro along the ramparts of the rock in front of his dwelling, looking to sea-ward ever and anon as if in expectation, but as his glass swept along a spotless horizon, he would fretfully resume his walk.

“I have waited three days over the time,” he muttered, “and yet Bernardo comes not.

He is either a traitor, or else he has been slain ! The latter is most probable !”

It was near night-fall when a speck in the distance met his eye. For a little time he scanned it closely with his glass, and then he knew it was the periagua of Bernardo, and giving some hasty orders to him whom he intended to leave in command of the garrison, he passed down the rocky stairs, and springing into a boat, bade the boatmen row him forth to meet the returning spy, so anxious was he to hear of the success of the voyage.

Soon he had passed beyond the narrow channel into the blue and open sea beyond, and as a fair and dashing breeze bore the periagua down towards him, he soon stood upon her deck.

“Where is Bernardo ?” asked he of the helmsman, who with but one other was all that could be seen of the six who had went forth.

“Dead—slain by the Spaniards !” was the brief reply.

“How and when ?”

“On our arrival we were recognized by some who had seen us at Mariel. In the attempt to escape, Bernardo with two others was killed. We twain have been pursued hotly, but by running through the narrow channels among the islands, we have escaped !”

“There were six of you, three only are killed—where is the other ?”

“Captured or deserted before we were discovered. He went on shore as soon as we landed, to sell some fish to keep up our appearance of fishermen, and we never saw him again !”

“The villain hath betrayed you !”

While Solonois was receiving this sad information, the periagua was rapidly nearing the harbor, and soon she was within it. Solonois went not ashore, but repairing aboard his vessel, made the signal for sailing.

Soon the three ships were standing out of the harbor, close-hauled to the wind and bearing down toward the island of Cuba.

CHAPTER VIII.

'But can stern Power, with all his vaunt,
Or Pomp, with all her courtly glare,
The settled heart of Vengeance daunt,
Or change the purpose of Despair!'

'WELL, sir, what news have you?' asked the governor Larranaga, of the Admiral, as the latter hastily entered the reception-room of the palace, having the moment before sent in a request to see Don Enrico on a matter of importance.

'We have captured one of the gang of Solonois, your excellency.'

'Ay? Whence is he from—have ye questioned him?'

'We have. For a long time he was obstinately silent, and the rack alone forced from him a confession, which as he was dying when 'twas given, we well may deem correct!'

'What said he? where is the fiend—their leader?'

'At his island fastness, preparing for another expedition, intending an attack upon the most defenceless and the richest part of all our coast, Los Cayos.'

'How came this fellow within your reach?'

'He was one of a party of spies, disguised as fishermen, who were sent to ferret out your designs, perhaps to study some plan for attack!'

'And the rest—where are they?'

'Three were slain while attempting to escape, two have got clear of the harbor, but my boats are in close pursuit, and they must be taken; it will be impossible for them to escape!'

'In what craft are they?'

'In a swift-sailing periagua.'

'What force did this spy represent as under Solonois?'

'Over three hundred, and three large ships, well armed!'

'How soon did he intend his attack upon Cayos!'

'The spy knew not, but said that the crews were impatient; and as they are short of provisions, it must be made early!'

'Think you it will be made ere you can reach the same point?'

'I fear it can, for he is nearer there than we, but if your excellency will permit—'

'Permit?—sir, I should scarce think you need wait for *permission*, or *orders* to act now! You have already heard my will in regard to this matter—begone, and obey it!'

The Admiral, chafed at the uncourteous

manner of the fretful governor, turned upon his heel to leave the apartment, but before he had reached the door, the governor again spoke in a milder tone.

'Excuse my harshness, Admiral, but this fiend has changed my whole nature, and I forget myself and others also, when his cursed vision comes athwart my mind!'

'I know that the causes of vexation are sufficient excuse for your excellency. Have you any further orders?' responded the mollified officer.

'Yes, take all the force you can muster, with you, and if possible, reach Cayos before him. If you cannot, he must be followed to his rendezvous and destroyed there. Take the city hangman, Lobo the negro, and hang every one whom you can take alive, at your yard-arms, except *him*, but if taken, reserve Solonois for me!'

'Your excellency's orders shall be obeyed. Farewell!'

'Farewell, sir! Let me see you only if victorious!'

* * * * *

The inhabitants of Cayos were wrapped in the quiet of night. The bright moonbeams fell upon their slate-covered roofs, and silvered their dashing fountains or glistened upon the dew-drops which gemmed the bending flowers in their beautiful gardens. The streets were tenantless and quiet; nature and all things around seemed to be at rest, slumbering in the calmness of safety.

The midnight hour was past, and still the quiet was unbroken. Another hour passed on, and then across the waveless bay which lay beneath the moonlight like a broad sheet of burnished silver, a fleet of dark, crowded boats came noiselessly with muffled oars. There were no sentinels to inquire if they were friends or foes—and none noted their approach.

The villagers, the denizen of lordly palace, and the occupant of the humble cot, still slumbered, not dreaming perchance that a foe was near, that Death with his wintry breath and great black wings, stood bending almost above their couches.

Silently from their boats landed three hundred armed and savage men. By their actions it seemed that they had already received their orders, for dividing off into small parties, they rapidly spread themselves through the streets of the little town, a few posting themselves before each door.

When all had gone to their several stations save Solonois and a chosen body-guard, the chieftain advanced to the Plaza in the centre of the place.

O, how quiet and lovely was the scene which met his view as he gazed around. In the centre of the square a silvery fountain cast its sparkling jet high in the air; upon the grass and flowers that verged it, the surrounding trees threw beautiful and fantastic shadows. Tall and elegant houses fronted on the four sides this clear promenade, for here dwelt the wealthiest of the citizens.

It was almost dawn, and still all was quiet, ay, quiet as the sea, when the hurricane is about to burst in fury forth upon it.

The chieftain had cast many an impatient glance toward the east, for he awaited the approach of day, to begin his attack, when no night-shadows could aid the fugitives to escape. His men could be seen in silent and dark groups here and there scattered along before the houses, where the shadows would best conceal them. And still the doomed villagers slept on in quiet.

At last a red tinge came, like the hectic flush of death to night, upon the eastern sky, and the moon and stars began to grow pale. Still all was quiet in Cayos, save now and then in some lowly cot the stir of the poor, whose hour of labor began to approach, might be heard.

But soon was the quiet broken. With a voice which broke like thunder upon the silence, arose the fearful shout of Solonois! 'Death to the Spaniards!'

On through the streets rolled the cry, from three hundred hoarse and fiendish throats: 'Death to the Spaniards!'

And then as the startled citizens sprung to their doors, and lattices, to know the cause of

this strange and dreadful shout, came the rattling death-shots, and the clash of murderous steel. Oh, holy heaven! who could describe the scene that followed them. Shouts, groans, shrieks, cries for mercy, and prayers to the Almighty God of Heaven, for help, arose in one dread sweep of confusion on the air.

Aged men, tender and helpless women, feeble infancy, beauty, wealth and poverty, as they rushed from their couches came forth to die.

Cried a feeble woman for mercy, her answer was: 'Death to the Spaniards!'

Shouted an unarmed man for quarters, the crushing blow or unerring bullet was his answer!

Not long could this dreadful scene last. In a few moments the pirates had mastered the town, and only when tired of slaying did they cease to kill, and the few whom they reserved, were the young and fair, whose fate was worse, far worse than death.

We cannot dwell on scenes like these, therefore will pass the deeds of that day, without a notice, which if truthful in its horrible description, would sicken every heart.

Cayos was taken, the success of the pirates had been complete. Ere the set of sun that day, with boats laden with riches, the pirates returned to their ships, which were anchored outside, for the bay was too shallow to admit vessels of a heavy draught. Before they had left the town however, they had fired the houses, and when night came on the desolated village was in a blaze.

Loud were their shouts of glee as the buccaniers gazed on this, to them, most rare bonfire, but they little deemed that the light served as a beacon to guide a foe toward them.

The Spanish Admiral was advancing with a heavy force, and as he saw the red flames rise above the burning village, he cried in the madness of his vexation:

'We are too late to save—but not too late for revenge!'

Silence was on the water, and stillness on board the anchored ships of the pirates, for

all of these, fatigued and worn down by the bloody strife and toil which they had undergone, slept, slept as if guilt was an opiate, and crime a soother unto slumber.

But there was one among them who seldom slept.

'One more drop in the river of my revenge!' murmured Solonois, as he paced his silent deck. 'Oh God! my Medora, my child, I have lost all now, save the one fell desire to be revenged!'

Again he passed to and fro, pressing his hand upon his brow, as if the fever-fire was burning there, even almost unto bursting. Suddenly he paused and gazed out to seaward. A smile of wild delight stole across his countenance, as he kneeled upon the deck and with his glass ranged along the waters.

'So ho! more food for my revenge!' he cried. 'The fools have thought to catch us weary and unprepared, but they shall learn that Solonois doth never sleep!'

The quick eye of the pirate had caught sight of the advancing Spaniards, though they were several miles distant yet.

Quickly planned he then a way to receive them. He hastily aroused his own crew, and despatched boats to the other ships, warning them of the approaching danger, at the same time bidding all not to shew themselves as the Spaniards approached, but to be concealed so as to induce the enemy to thing them asleep without watch or guard.

He ordered all of his cannon and musketry to be heavily loaded, so as to sweep the decks of the Spaniards when they came sufficiently near.

Long before the Spaniards came near, the pirates were ready to receive them, and yet not a sound could be heard, or a motion be observed on board their vessels.

The Spanish Admiral was confident of being able to surprise and board the pirates before they could arm to prevent him, and as his flotilla bore down upon them, led by the frigate, which he had got once more afloat, he bade his crews prepare to spring upon the enemy's decks, and when there to give no quarter.

On, on towards the dark and silent hulls of the anchored ships swept the Spanish fleet, and upon their bows and bulwarks crowded in dense masses their eager crews. The Admiral had recognized the vessel of Solonois, and bade his helmsman lay the frigate alongside of her.

On came the Spaniards, and still not a sound was heard from the deck of the pirates.

The frigate's arching bowsprit was already over the bulwarks of the pirate ship, a hundred ready men were preparing to spring upon her decks.

'Now!' shouted the Spanish Admiral. 'Now is the time! Victory or——'

'Death to the Spaniards!' rose hoarsely from the pirate's deck, and then with sound and light like the terrific burst of a thousand thunder clouds condensed in one, came the flash of cannon and the rain of hurling shot. The Admiral's battle shout had been closed in death. As the waving wheat falls before the scythe of the reaper, so fell the Spaniards before the fearful, deadly, and unexpected fire of their enemies, who in a moment more took advantage of their confusion, and in turn boarded them.

Fearful now for a time was the strife, as breast to breast and hand to hand the foes sought for the mastery. But soon the Spaniards fled below the hatches, and the pirates had mastered the frigate. Then Solonois had time to glance at his consorts, and found that they also had been successful. The whole Spanish fleet was in his power, though half their crews were slain.

An awful scene occurred on board those ships at dawn that morning. One by one the poor Spaniards were called up from below, and as each stepped upon the deck he was beheaded, and this was the calm and terrible order of Solonois. Of all that fleet, but one man was spared, and he was Lobo, the negro hangman, a hideous and unsightly being, whose looks of beastly ferocity had caused the pirate chief to inquire what station he held on board the frigate.

The negro readily told his profession, and the purpose for which he had been brought in the frigate, but begged to be spared, offering to join the pirates, for what to him was crime or bloodshed?

'Will ye swear by the Oboe of your own country, and drink blood to your oath, that you will be faithful to me, and serve me, and me alone, as I shall bid ye, now and while you live, if I spare you?'

'I will swear and drink blood' said the hideous Ethiopian, as he crouched at the feet of the chief, upon the bloody deck.

'Arise, then, and beware, for I know what is worse than death!' said the pirate chief, sternly.

The negro obeyed.

'You must return to your master and tell him of all, save this promise of your own, that has occurred to-day, and then wait with him till I send for ye. Beware how ye dare to play traitor, for my eye will be on ye!'

The negro trembled and quailed beneath the terrible glance of that eye, and again he swore to obey.

'You see this ring?' said Solonois, as he showed the negro a large seal of jet, with the impress of a skull and cross-bones upon it.

The negro shuddered as he answered—'Lobo sees it!'

'Remember whenever or wherever you see see it again, to obey its wearer!'

'Lobo will remember the ring!'

'Now take a periagua, and steer along the coast till you reach Havana. When there, tell the governor that I spared you to bear this message to him: say, that Solonois has hangmen of his own, as Larranaga soon shall see! Then remain at your old and exceedingly pleasant station, and remember that every time you hang a Spaniard you do me a favor! Now begone; I have given you life, but break the conditions, and by the oath you have sworn, you shall die! Remember the ring, and watch for my coming!'

'Lobo will be true!' was the response of the hideous hangman, and in a few moments he had departed.

CHAPTER IX.

'He is come from the land of the sword and flame,
From the dread battles of the Spanish main,
The snow-plumes wave o'er his victor crest—
Like a glory the red cross hangs at his breast;
The courser is black as black can be,
Save the brow-star, white as the foam of the sea.
And he wears a scarf of broidery rare,
The last love-gift of his lady fair:
It bore for device a cross and a dove,
And the words, 'I am vow'd to my God and my
love!'

He comes not back the same that he went,
For his sword has been tried, and his strength has
been spent;

His raven hair has coarser grown,
And his brow has caught a darker frown,
And his lip hath lost its boyish red,
And the shade of the south o'er his cheek is
spread;

But stately his steps, and his bearing high,
And wild the light of his fiery eye,
And proud in the lists were the maiden bright
Who might claim the Knight of the Cross for her
knight."

AT last, after seventeen years of bloody
and terrible strife we have conquer-
ed! Solonois is *dead* you say!' said a grey-haired but eagle-eyed
old man to an officer of middle age, who stood
before him, in the reception hall of the gov-
ernment palace at Havana, on a clear morning
in the spring of 1673.

'Yes, Don Enrico, the pirate is certainly
among the slain! His body lies unburied,
to bleach with its comrades, on the blood-
stained rock of Tortuga!'

'How many of his band, have ye cap-
tured!'

'But three. The rest scorned our proffer-
ed quarter, and like their leader fought unto
death. Our numbers overpowered them, but
had it not been for the traitor sentinel whom
our gold and a promised pardon won to trea-
son, we never could have conquered them!'

'Was my nephew in the fight?'

'Yes, your excellency, and bore him like
a lion in that fray; it was his brave hand
which struck the pirate-chieftain down!'

'His hand? Oh God I am revenged! Now is this well!' shouted the aged governor, while his eyes gleamed with a wild fierce joy.

'Send the boy hither to me, I would thank him; his bravery deserves more than a passing notice!' continued the chief, not noticing the look of surprise, which his strange language had caused to rise upon the countenance of the officer, who bowed and left the room.

In a few moments a tall and manly youth entered, one who from his appearance might be eighteen or twenty years of age, and who was so exceedingly handsome, that we must briefly describe him, that our lady readers may fall in love with him.

His form was graceful, his eyes black, large and sparkling with the bright light of youth and intelligence; his brow fair and lofty; his lips firm and finely shaped; and on his right cheek was a singular scar, crescent shaped, which, instead of marring, gave an appearance of manly life to his perfect features. His hair, dark and glossy as the wing of the spotless raven, hung in luxuriant curls adown his finely turned neck.

A bright, glad smile was on his noble face as he entered the room where Don Enrico awaited him, and as he advanced toward him, in full musical tones he spoke.

'Captain Narvaez informed me that you wished my attendance, uncle!'

'Yes, Juan, I wished to speak with you regarding the late battle, and to thank you for your gallantry. You have done credit to your name and ancestry!'

'I have only done my duty, uncle, in aiding to destroy a horde of terrible murderers and sea-robbers!'

'And so your sword gave the death-blow to him, the pirate-chief, the bloody-fiend, Solonois!'

'He fell beneath my sabre!'

Oh, wild was the gleam in that old man's eye as he cried, 'Ay, boy—and he was—— no I will not tell you yet, for it is not all com-

plete. She too must share the next disclosure!'

'What mean you, dear uncle? I do not understand these strange words!'

'You shall, boy, you shall when the right time comes!' said the uncle, and there was a strong but hidden meaning in his manner.

'Uncle, I've a favor to ask?' again said the youth.

'What is it, Juan?'

'I wish to go into the country to your villa again. It will recruit me, and you know I hate a city life. The fresh sea-breeze and the delicious fruits and a ramble among those hills will make me so happy!'

'Is there nothing but the sea-breeze and fruits and flowers there, boy, to make you happy? Has not the bright eyes of your cousin Luella something to do with your wish for a country life?' asked the governor, somewhat sternly.

The youth blushed as he answered:—

'Oh yes, it will joy my heart to see her, uncle, but she is my *cousin*, you know, and I never shall fall in *love* with so near a relative!'

'She is—' the old man paused as suddenly as he had commenced this remark, and then confusedly added—'You can go, Juan, but beware sir, a *cousin* is not to be a *lover*!' As he sternly made this last remark, he gazed upon the youth as if he would read his very soul, but the latter laughed gaily, and responded:

'Oh never fear that I shall love dear Luella, other than as a *cousin*, dear uncle!'

'Cousins are dangerous relations!' was the answer; but the youth heard it not, for with a light and hasty step he had already left the room.

The old man arose from his chair and soliloquized as he paced to and fro along the room:—'His *cousin*! It is well that he knows not the relationship that actually exists between them. O well is my plan of revenge filling up. The father slain by the hand of

the son ! Ha ! Ha ! and *she*, she who dared to blacken the purest blood that ever flowed in Spanish veins, *she* shall know all, and when the *three* are dead—dead—then will my revenge be complete !'

For a time the governor paced up and down the room muttering incoherently. At last he rung a bell which was instantly answered by a servant, to whom he gave the order :

'Bid captain Narvaez to my presence !'

In a short time the officer re-appeared.

'You told me that three of the pirates were still alive in your hands, captain, did you not ?'

'Yes, your Excellency !'

'I had forgotten to give orders regarding their disposal. Let them be hung at sun-rise on the Plaza at the Punta !'

'Without trial, or even a court martial ?'

'Ay, were they not taken in arms ? Have they given trial to one out of the thousands whom they have slain ? Let them die like dogs, as they are ! Oh would that their leader had been spared for my doom, but as it is, the manner of his death will yet add to the depth and bitterness of my revenge !'

The officer bowed, and left the room, to obey the stern orders of his commander.

CHAPTER X.

'Together, love, we'll roam, and share
The dewy freshness of the air ;
And, as we softly steal along,
Cheered by the skylark's mellow song—
Or watch, across the eastern sky,
The pale streaks spreading far and nigh—
Or listen to the murmuring beat
Of brooks that bubble at our feet—
We'll rest beneath yon hillock green,
And gaze upon the chequered scene.

See, o'er yon mountain's misty head
The brightening sun has upwards sped ;
Hastening its fervid beams to cool
On spangled mead, or dimpled pool ;
Or drinking from each floweret fair
The diamond drops that glisten there :
Its shelving rays scarce peep between
The dewy leaves of valley green ;
Reflecting back their glittering sheen
In thousand sparkles die :
While over yonder mountain steep,
In chaster, colder lines they sweep,
Flinging its giant shadow deep
O'er copse and greenwood nigh ;
And dyeing dark, with lessening shade,
Each verdant hill and grassy glade.'

IT was a sweet spring morning, and a sweet scene for a lovely spring-day sun to shine upon. At the foot of the lofty 'Montes de Hierro,' or Iron Mountains, a few leagues to the southward of Havana, on the sea coast, and in sight of the Table Land of Matanzas, stood the country palace of Don Enrico Larranaga.

It was a princely mansion, and lovely was the spot whereon it was erected. Between the mountains and the sea a level space of table-land intervened, and this was overgrown with fruit and flower trees, a tastefully laid out park arranged with fountains, lakelets stocked with beautiful fish and rare aquatic birds, meadow-greens and flower-beds, through which the small gazelle-like deer of the island wandered in tamed and fearless herds, spread spaciously around the mansion. The bright streams which leaped in sheets of foam adown the mountain rocks, supplied the fountains, and here and there rushed murmuring across the plain into the sea beyond.

The space between the sea-side and the

mountains was narrow, but so completely filled up with beautiful things, that its smallness would pass any eye unnoticed.

The lofty hills in its rear were beautiful, grand and majestic. Out from their dark crevices whence the silvery springs like bright winged spirits leaped, green vines and flowering shrubs grew, and clung to the dark cliffs and topling rocks; evergreen trees fringed the lofty heights, and threw their gaarded, fantastic limbs ~~out~~ upon the background of cloudless sky, looking like sentinels of Nature placed upon her out-posts to watch the coming of her hour of doom.

Upon an almost inaccessible point of the cliff, directly above the pleasure-grounds which surrounded Don Enrico's palace, was the ruins of an ancient castle, which was regarded by the superstitious peasantry who lived around, with fear and awe, for they deemed that it was haunted, and told strange tales of a spirit which had been seen at night to come forth robed in white, and to gaze mournfully down from the lofty and crumbled battlements, and sing in strains so wild and beautiful in their sadness, that though they feared her and fled, their ears were charmed with the memory of her melody.

And they told, too, of the shadows of men, and many a legend of blood, and horror, and love's wild romance had they fastened upon this spot, which, however, none of them ever dared to approach. Indeed, had they desired so to do, it would have required a bold heart, steady hand, and sure foot, to have reached those heights. The castle had evidently been built when the Spaniards first landed upon the island, as a stronghold of safety where no enemy might easily approach.

Almost beneath the perpendicular rock on which stood the ruined castle, a lovely little lake received the bright contents of a spring which leaped in a sheet of foam from a cleft in the rock above, filling the air with a wild, clear gush of music, like the rush of a gale over a single string of an Eolian harp when all the rest are broken.

Between this lake and the rock, on a narrow mound of moss which was shaded by the overhanging precipice, at the time when we introduce the reader to this scene, were seated two persons, whose appearance accorded well with Nature's beauty, for they too were peerlessly fair.

One was a girl, not more than seventeen or eighteen, whose long black hair stole in glossy and unconfined curls adown a peerless neck, and over shoulders lovely beyond our cold pen's power to describe. Her cheek's rich hue told but of health and happiness, and her large dark eyes were so lustrous and dewy, that they seemed indeed the flowers of the soul's garden. Long lashes drooped over and softly shadowed them, and as she laughed her voice seemed to mock the silvery fountain's clear dash, while from between her lips as like a rose-bud-cleft, her small teeth glittered like pearls in a lovely ruby set. Her bare arms were round and full, and so fair, that one might almost wish to die by strangulation with them around his neck, and as her form reclined upon that soft mossy sod, it seemed to have unconsciously found an attitude in which best to display its every grace.

The one by her side ~~was~~—reader, you have seen him before. It was Juan, the handsome nephew of Don Enrico.

The small hand of the lady was in his, and we know not whether he was engaged in gazing upon the rich jewels which hooped those tapering fingers, or admiring the hand itself, as he thus sat in converse with her.

'Dear Luella!' said he, 'I am so happy once more to find myself here where the air is fresh, and the birds are singing, and the very flowers seem to be sweeter than those in the town. Everything seems to welcome me, too. The birds all seem to add to their mellow notes, I am sure the deer gazed more brightly than ever upon me as I passed through the park, and even that bright fountain appears to have a voice of kindness in its gentle murmur!'

'You have spoken of the welcome of birds,

and flowers, and fountains, but not a word about Luella's greeting! Was her kiss colder than usual, that it is so soon forgotten?" said the maiden, sadly; but inexpressibly sweet was her sadness, as is the mellow twilight of a balmy summer eve.

"No, dear cousin, I am not forgetful or regardless of your affectionate welcome, but my late life has cast terms of compliment and courtly phrases from my brain, and I fear that for a time you'll find me as rude and uncouth as the sailors with whom I have lately associated!"

"If you could learn rudeness from associating with them, could you not learn gentleness now in my company?"

"Yes, dear cousin, am I not taking a lesson at this moment? By the way, while I think of it, have you done as you promised when we parted?"

"Unto what promise do you allude, Juan?"

"That you would come here to our favorite seat each day at sunset and think of me, who was absent amid perils and dangers!"

"I came, dear Juan, but once, and—"

"Thus you broke a promise which made me spend an half hour at every sunset in thinking of my bright-eyed cousin!" playfully interrupted the youth.

"Hear me, Juan, before you condemn me for breaking that promise. I came hither the evening after you left, and was so sadly frightened that I shall never dare to come here again alone!"

"What frightened you? I thought that Spanish maidens were not to be scared by shadows!"

"I heard the spirit of the castle, and oh Juan, never had mortal ear such strains before. She sung a melody that enchained me to the spot, and I lingered here long after nightfall, and then almost dead with terror, fled homeward, where I found Elizabetta almost crazed with anxiety about me!"

"The spirit of the castle? Surely my cousin Luella doth not regard the superstitious fancies and tales of the peasantry with a thought of truth!"

"Oh, Juan, had you heard the spirit's song you would not have spoken now so jestingly! Will you come here with me this eve? Perchance again we may hear the mystic voice!"

"I will come to laugh at your foolish fancies, dear cousin!"

"Or to learn that I have told you true, dear Juan!"

CHAPTER XI.

'Come, tell me all that thou hast seen,
And look thou tell me true!
Since I from Smaylho'me tower have been,
What did thy lady do?'

'I AM here, your Excellency!' said a voice behind the governor, Don Enrico, as he sat late at night in his easy chair beside his writing cabinet.

With a quick start the nervous old man turned and beheld Elizabetta, the nurse, for whom he had previously sent. It is several years since we have seen her, reader, and you would scarce recognize in the grey-haired duenna before you, the good-looking middle-aged woman who brought the pale and wounded babe into that same room some seventeen years before, yet this was the same.

'It is well!' was the quick, stern answer of Don Enrico: 'I have sent for you to know what has occurred, since I last consulted you!'

'Nothing, your Excellency, nothing unusual or strange!'

'Have you noted the manner of Juan towards my daughter?'

'I have, your excellency!'

'Doth he not *love* her?'

'As a cousin, not otherwise, I think, your Excellency!'

'Doth he not seem to delight in her company? Doth he not love to ride and walk and sing with her? Is he not as constant in his attendance as her shadow?'

'There are no others fitting to be his associates at the villa; can your Excellency expect if your daughter is kept so secluded from society, that she will not enjoy the company of her only companion?'

'Her *only* companion?' angrily responded the governor. 'Have I not set you to be a continual guard and watch over their actions; to permit no intimacy beyond the mere courtesy allowed by relationship?'

'You have, Don Enrico, and I have done my duty!' answered the woman mildly but firmly.

'He doth not dream of his birth, or that Luella is other than his cousin?'

'No, your Excellency although I have

heard him complain that there was to him an unfathomable mystery which tortured his heart, and he murmured about strange expressions which had fallen from your lips !'

'It is well, Elizabetta. You must return and keep strict watch and ward over them. I love my daughter—she is my second-born, my pure and beautiful,—she must not find the disgraceful fate of the first who is——'

The old man suddenly paused, as he noted a searching look of anxious curiosity, and also a strange and peculiar smile upon the woman's face, and angrily bade her begone and leave him to his own secrets.

After she had left the room, he remained in a quiet and musing posture, at times audibly expressing his thoughts, again muttering low and incoherently,

'It must be done soon, and the sooner the better !' said he as after a short time he arose from his chair, and as he paced the floor he continued, 'Seventeen years have I been baffled in my endeavors to conquer *him* ! Seventeen years have I been waiting to give *her* the last draught of misery's cup ! Seventeen years have I been waiting to fill to the full the measure of my revenge, and now one more act, and it will be filled to running over !'

With a look of hateful exultation, a sad expression for one so near the grave to wear, he rang the bell which always lay upon his table.

'Send Lobo, the negro, here to me !' said he to the servant who answered the summons.

In a short time the negro appeared, and he too had undergone a change in his hideous appearance, since the time when his life was spared by the pirate-chief. His woolly hair, long and matted, hung down over his repulsive features, and as his complexion was black as jet, his hair which was turned entirely white, contrasted and rendered it even darker in appearance. There was a beastliness in the expression of the negro's eye and a blood-hound look about his mouth, which made him a sight utterly revolting even to the stern and hard-hearted governor, who ac-

tually shuddered as he gazed upon the object before him.

'Lobo is here !' said the negro, as he halted before the governor and awaited his commands.

'Lobo, you remember the message that Solonois the pirate sent me by you, when he spared your life ?'

'Lobo has not forgot !' was the gruff answer of the hideous hangman.

'You know that the pirate is dead ?'

'Folks say so ! Lobo hasn't seen his ghost yet !'

'No, fool, nor will his ghost be apt to trouble you ; but do you remember the message he sent me ?'

'Lobo never has forgotten ?'

'Do you think you can repeat it word for word, at a time when I shall command ye to do so ?'

'Yes !'

'Have you strength yet to do your duty as a hangman ?'

'Lobo is strong !' and the fiendish looking man raised his muscular arms, as if it would be a pleasure to try his professional strength, even on the governor.

'Do you think that you could twine a fathom of hemp around a fair lady's neck, and then do the same for a brave and strong youth, if they were in your power, and I was to bid ye do it ?'

'Lobo is your slave, and you his master !' answered the negro, but his big red eyes rolled with a kind of beastly pleasure in their sockets, as he heard that such pleasant duties were in store for him.

'Well, be ready to go with me into the country in a few weeks ; I have one more job for you, and then you shall be *free* !'

'But *one* more job ? Lobo don't want to be *free* ; he wants to be city-hangman as long as he lives ! He loves to see folks kick at the air and dance horn-pipes on nothin' !'

'Well—well, you shall have your wish ; but *one* job has been reserved for years for you, and soon *that* shall be finished !'

CHAPTER XII.

'If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moon-light;
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout, the ruins gray.
When the broken arches are black in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain shower
Streams on the ruined central tower;
When buttress and buttress, alternately,
Seem framed of ebony and ivory;
When silver edges the imagery,
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
When distant Tweed is heard to rave,
And the owl to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,
Then go—but go alone the while—
Then view St David's ruined pile;
And, home returning, soothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair!'

IT was sunset, not such a mild clear sunset as the morning had given promise of, on the day when we introduced the reader to a view of Don Enrico's country seat, as also to his fair daughter, in the tenth chapter.

The sky was full of dark, ragged clouds, which flew athwart the heavens like dark messenger spirits, bearers of sad news to remoter regions. The wind howled mournfully among the ever-green trees and the ruined towers of the old castle upon the cliff-top, above the lakelet where we left the lovers seated in the morning; and the shadows of cloud, and tree and rock fell darkly upon the water. More deep were the sounds of the bubbling cascade which still leaped brightly down the rock.

The cousins, Luella and Juan, were seated where they had been in the morning, for at her request, he had returned to try and hear the voice of that which he deemed the *fabled* spirit of the ruined castle.

But as the advancing night gave such threatening signs of an approaching storm, the fair Luella shuddered, and exclaimed in her timidity:

'Let us go home, Juan! There surely is a storm approaching, and, I know scarcely why, but I fear to remain in this place. Oh, I feel that unseen spirits do hover around here!'

'Unseen and unheard will they ever be, I think, dear cousin, but let us wait a little longer, I wish entirely to dispel your foolish fancies!'

'Oh, Juan, they are not mere fancies—ha! Oh, listen now, and tell me if *that* is fancy!' and as she spoke the frightened girl clung to his manly form, while she trembled as did the leaves upon the gale which swept among the trees above them.

Strange, indeed, were the sounds that rose upon the evening air, and sweet as they were strange. Almost without breathing, Juan and Luella listened to the wild strains which were borne upon the breeze, and they plainly distinguished in the mournful tones of a female voice the following words.

'Twilight dews are softly falling
O'er the earth and on the sea;
And the loved are wildly calling,
Calling wildly, calling me!

Hark, oh, hark! I hear them speaking,
Loved ones, come, oh come to me!
My heart, oh my heart is breaking,
Would to God I might be free!

The midnight shades are coming fast,
And their gloom is all around;
The mournful winds are sweeping past,
With a deep and solemn sound.

Oh bear me news, wild evening blast,
Tidings of my lord and child!
Oh sweep their spirits ever past
'Mid those clouds so dark and wild!'

'Oh merciful Heaven! How strange, how mystical!' exclaimed the terrified Luella, as she clung still closer to her cousin, who had not as yet spoken.

'Think you now that this is mere fancy, Juan?'

'No, cousin, it is not, but this is no *spirit*, the old castle must be inhabited by some one!'

'Oh no—it is nothing but a ruin, and the pathway to it is broken down and impassable.

That voice is from some sad spirit, for when I first heard its song, the words were sad as these, but yet they were different. Hark! She sings again!'

Again the low mournful voice swept along the evening air, and they listened:

'They tore him away, my pride and joy,
They wrested him from my clinging arms;
They tore him away, my darling boy,
And gave him to death with all his charms;
And his father came
From over the main,
But his infant and bride were gone
And the light of his heart was flown!'

Again the voice was hushed. It was now dark, and the clouds rendered darkness doubly black.

'It must be a human being; I believe not in spirits! Stay here for a moment, dear Luella, and I will soon return!' said Juan, as he sprung from the side of his cousin, and commenced ascending the cliff by a filled up and precipitous path, which once had been used as a way to the ruined castle.

'Oh Juan! cousin, for the love of heaven, leave me not alone!' screamed the frightened girl, but her words were drowned in the terrific burst of thunder that rolled along the sky, and at the same instant she saw by the long quivering flash of vivid lightning, the form of Juan upon a rock half way up the cliff, but as she gazed she saw that the rock was giving way beneath his feet—that he was falling. Then came another crash, like rattling thunder. She heard the fearful plunge of rocks and rubbish in the water of the lake, but the storm was now raging, and amid the din and turmoil she could not distinguish the voice of her cousin. In agony again and again screamed she his name. But alone did she hear the wild howling of the storm.

Swift almost as the wind which scattered her dishevelled tresses, she arose and ran toward the palace to alarm the inmates, for from the single glance which she had caught of her falling cousin, she feared the worst for his safety.

CHAPTER XIII.

'O speak,' said his Lord; 'by thy hopes of grace,
What stranger must we hail!'
But the haggard look of Donald's face
Made his faltering words to fail.
'It is a knight in some foreign guise—
His like I did never behold;
For the stony look of his beamless eyes
Made my very life-blood cold.'

WHEN Lobo, the negro hangman, left the apartment of Don Enrico, after the interview described in our eleventh chapter, he hastened homeward, for it was late, and like his race generally, he was one who loved sleep.

His dwelling was a rude stone hut down near the mouth of the harbor, close to the water's edge, and but a short distance from that portion of the Punta which always, even up to the present day, has been reserved as the place for public executions.

As Lobo hurried along past the spot where he had so often launched miserable criminals from the scaffold, and gloated upon their writhing forms, he looked not to the right or the left, for his spirit which feared nothing human, was strongly tinctured with a dread of ghosts.

As he neared his hut and saw through some chinks in the wall how brightly gleamed the fire which but an hour before he had left

without fuel, to smoulder in embers until his return, the negro began to fear that some ghost had taken possession of his miserable domicile. Therefore he cautiously approached and peeped through the chinks of the wall, before he attempted to enter.

But as he saw a man dressed in the coarse habiliments of a common fisherman, seated upon the ground, with his back turned towards him, busily engaged over his own supper which he had left beside the fire, Lobo's look of terror gave place to an expression of anger and ferocity, and with a single stride he reached his door and kicked it wide open. His next stride was to the intruder's side, and his huge black hand was raised as if to crush the person with one fearful blow, but as the stranger turned, on hearing the step of the negro, a scream of terror burst from the lips of the latter, and he fell grovelling to the earth, muttering in deep hollow tones, expressive of the very agony of fear:

'It is *his* ghost! It is his ghost!'

'What is the matter, fool? Get up; I shall want mere fuel, shortly, and I now want wine to wash this half-cooked food down!' said the stranger sternly.

'Oh don't slay Lobo, now!' again moaned the agitated and terror-stricken negro.

'Fool, I'll harm ye not! Why do you not obey me? Do you not remember your oath and this ring?' As the stranger spoke he passed his hand before the negro's face, and upon a thin pale finger rested a massive ring set with jet, and well did the negro remember where he had seen the skull and cross-bones which thereon were graven. He slowly arose to his knees, and for a moment gazed upon the face of the speaker, then crawling a little closer, reached out his huge black hand and touched the hand which was held toward him. The touch seemed to re-assure him, for he now spoke,

'My master, are you alive?'

'Yes, but was nearly famished, when I landed, an hour since!'

'They told me you were killed!'

'It is well. It must still be thought so! And now that you begin to know me, get up on your feet and attend to my wants! Do you remember your oath and its conditions!'

'Lobo has not forgotten, and you are now my master!'

'Go and get me some wine,—I am weak and faint, and beware! Remember that I *cannot die*, therefore treason would be useless, and if you try to deceive me, I shall know it, and a fate far worse than death awaits you!'

'Lobo will be true! He fears his oath of blood, and he fears the man who cannot die!' answered the negro in abject tones, as he passed from the door.

The reader has ere this recognized in the stranger, Solonois the pirate-chief, who was reported as slain. He seemed, as the light of Lobo's fire cast its fitful gleams upon him, like one who had arisen from the grave, for his face was pale and haggard, and his fierce black eyes were sunken and dark in their sockets. The seam of a still fresh wound,

extending from his brow down to his jaw-bone, added to his ghastly and unearthly appearance, and his matted and uncombed hair, which was now turned to an iron grey, hung in coarse masses down his sun-browned and haggard neck.

His dress was that of a common fisherman, consisting of a coarse cotton shirt, trousers of the same material, and a jacket of common cloth. But in the golden hilted dagger which could be seen as he bent down by the fire-side, and an inner vesture of richer material which could be observed where he had carelessly left the coarser garment unbuttoned at the collar, it was easy to see that his disguise was made by choice, not necessity.

The negro soon returned with wine and food, and still seeming to regard the pirate-chief with fear, he knelt as he placed the articles before him.

'Lobo, arise; I shall treat you as my friend, and make you rich, if you are true to me now!'

'Lobo is your slave!' answered the negro, in the same abject tones.

'When have you seen the governor?'

'Lobo came from him, when he met his master, but now!'

'What wanted he with you at this time of night?'

The negro related in brief, the substance of the interview.

'Strange! very strange!' muttered Solonois, as he pondered over this information: 'I know not why, but I sometimes think my wife and child yet live!'

For some time the pirate remained still, as if in deep thought, then starting to his feet, and draining one of the wine-flasks which the negro had brought, he spoke again:

'Lobo!'

'My master?'

'You must throw yourself continually in Don Enrico's way, and find out all you can of his plans, but never dare to act in anything concerning others, till you have first consulted me!'

'Lobo will obey!'

'You shall see me daily, in many disguises you may meet me, but be careful, never to appear to recognize me! When I am detected, *you* shall die!'

'Lobo will never be a traitor! He drank blood and swore by the Oboe of his own country!'

'It is well! Do you know anything of a brave and daring youth, who fought with the forces who surprised my band; a perfect devil in fight, a tall, handsome boy, with a scar shaped like the new moon, on his right cheek?'

'It must have been the governor's nephew; he is brave and handsome, and has a scar like the curve of the young moon, upon his cheek!'

'Don Enrico's nephew? He has neither brother nor sister; how know you that he hath a nephew?'

'This boy I have heard was brought from Spain, seventeen years ago. He has been in the governor's household ever since!'

'Seventeen years—' muttered the pirate: 'had my boy lived, he would have been about the age of this youth! It is strange. I could have slain him in the fight, and yet I would not; it is strange that I should ever spare a Spaniard. And he gave this cut upon my head, and had I not fallen amid a heap of slain, and counterfeited dead, he would have made more certain, I suppose! And yet, I do not even now feel like harming that boy; though many a Spaniard now shall feel my secret steel! Lobo, where dwells the officer who led the late attack upon my band?'

'Near the Cathedral, my master!'

'Know you how to gain admittance to his house in the night?'

'He keeps no guard; the weather is warm and the lattices which open over his garden toward whence comes the cool sea-breeze, are large, and yet so near the ground, a lover who would see his mistress, might easily scale them!'

'My mistress is revenge! Conceal that food and wine, and take this gold to buy more, when it is needed! Then show me where dwells that captain. He shall be my first victim!' As the pirate spoke he threw a heavy purse of gold at the feet of the negro, who obeyed his first orders, and then stood ready to go forth.

'Lobo has a dagger, or does his master want to see him use the bow-string!' said the negro, with a ferocious grin, as he exhibited a knotted cord of silk, which was well adapted for its purpose of strangling.

'Keep them, till I bid you use them! I need nothing now but guidance. I must make one victim, and then I shall return and rest me for a time. You have a good place where I can remain unseen?'

'No one ever dares to come to Lobo's hut!' answered the negro, with a hideous smile. 'Men hate him, and fear him,—and he hates, but does not fear them!' responded the negro, as he obeyed the motion of the pirate's hand, and went forth to guide him on his fearful errand.

CHAPTER XIV.

'Then changed, I trow, was that bold Baron brow,
From the dark to the blood-red high;
'Now tell me the mien of the knight thou hast
seen,
For, by Mary, he shall die!''

IT was 'reception day' at the palace of the governor; a day when all may call and see their ruler; a day which he devotes to hearing and relieving the complaints of his people; a day when the beggar may ask alms of him, or the noble may flatter and pay their court to him.

The governor was seated in his chair of state, attending to the duties of the day, surrounded by a bevy of persons, some of whom had favors to ask, others compliments and salutations to offer. But suddenly at the outer edge of the crowd a low murmur was heard, and their expressions of horror ran from lip to lip.

A pale and breathless messenger burst through the throng which surrounded Don Enrico, and as he caught his eye, raised high a bloody paper which he held in his hand and exclaimed:

'Captain Narvaez is slain, your excellency; and if this dreadful record written in his blood with a dagger's point, speaks true, Solonóis the fiend of blood, the Buccaneer, yet lives!'

Pale grew that old man's face with surprise and astonishment as he heard this strange announcement.

'Hand me the paper!' he cried; but his voice was thick and husky, and the hand which he stretched out, quivered like a reed in a hurricane.

Slowly he read each word, apparently unconscious that he made it audible. The people shuddered as they heard: '*Death to the Spaniards! Solonóis!*'—for that fearful cry had become but too well known to all of them.

'Whence came this paper? It is in his hand-writing!' groaned the governor.

'It was left on the breast of Captain Narvaez, who was murdered in his bed last night!' answered the pallid messenger.

'Then the bloody fiend was not slain, and hath been, perchance now, is in the city! I will give his weight in gold for his capture!' cried Don Enrico; and while yet the echoes of his voice rolled through the lofty room, a low fiendish laugh was heard amongst the crowd.

The eye of the governor glanced through the assembly as he plainly heard this, but he saw none save his courtiers and a few poor mendicants from whom the laugh could have come, and he not dreaming that these dared such disrespect, thought that his fancy might have misled him.

'Let the police be put on the alert, let placards offer to the people a reward that shall ensure his detection; let all men be warned to be on their guard!' continued the governor; and then as he heard a clear low whisper, like the hiss of a venomous serpent, utter: Let Larranaga beware for himself! he sprang wildly from his chair.

'Who spoke? Who dared to threaten me?' he shouted; but it seemed as if no ear save his own had heard the words, and again he thought it might be fancy that had deceived him; but he carefully scanned every face around ere he again seated himself.

'Lobo, I hope soon to have work for your hands!' said he, as he saw the negro hangman who stood near the door, wearing his usual look of beastly ferocity.

'Lobo is his master's slave!' answered the black; but there was a wild meaning in his red glaring eyes which it was well that Don Enrico could not read.

'What is your errand?' asked Don Enrico, now, of an aged, white-haired mendicant, who with bent and withered form, stood shaking with palsied limbs, close beside the governor's chair.

'I have lost my only son, your excellency, who was my comfort and support, and I crave—'

'A pension, I suppose. Have his services and your statement made out in writing, and I will look at it when I have leisure.'

'Thanks to your excellency!' said the poor old man, as he feebly turned to give place to others; but as the hasty footstep of a spurred and armed courier rung on the threshold and again a murmur was heard from the crowd, who gave way to a new comer, the mendicant paused, and his pallid countenance lit up with an expression of innocent curiosity.

'Well, what now? More sad news?' asked Don Enrico, as he noted the breathless eagerness of the courier.

'This letter will tell you all!' answered the man, as he handed the governor a package.

The latter hastily broke the seal, and as he read it, his face at first expressed surprise and vexation, but in a moment grew more calm. 'My nephew has been slightly hurt by a fall!' he remarked to one near him, and then resumed his business of listening to the requests of those who surrounded him.

The courier turned upon his heel and departed, but was closely followed by the mendicant whom we have just alluded to; and as the latter pushed his way out through the crowd, he seemed to get along exceedingly well for one so aged and afflicted with the palsy.

As he passed the threshold, a glance of his eye fell upon the negro, Lobo, who stood near the door, and the latter at once followed him to the street.

'Lobo, follow that courier, and learn his news, either by gold, or otherwise, and hasten to the hut. I know not why, but I feel a strange interest in this nephew of the governor's!'

'Lobo will soon be there!' answered the negro, as he passed hastily on, and Solonois, whom of course the reader has recognized in the disguised mendicant, tottered along the street, receiving every now and then from some pitying passenger a trifling alms, in answer to his tremulous tones as he sighed: 'Caridad, por el amor de Dios!'

But it was not long ere he reached the hut of the hangman, and scarcely had he cast off the filthy rags which he had worn, and removed the other portions of his disguise, before Lobo entered.

'Well, what news have you gained?' asked he, impatiently, of the negro.

'The courier came from the villa of the governor, and brought a letter from Elizabetha, the favorite nurse and duenna of Don Enrico's daughter, informing her master that

his nephew was dangerously hurt by a fall from a cliff, and also sending for a surgeon!"

'Lobo, how far is it to this villa?'

'About four hours' ride.'

'Has a surgeon been despatched yet?'

'I know not, but can learn from the courier, who was ordered to procure one.'

'Do so, and stay; I shall go as the surgeon myself. Do you manage it with the courier to employ me!'

'I will obey, my master!' answered the negro, instantly disappearing on his errand.

After he was left alone, the pirate hastened to change his dress from a wardrobe of clothing which lay concealed beneath the coarse mat and heap of straw which served the negro for a bed, and as he did thus he seemed to be thinking of the information which he had received, for he thus soliloquized:

'Elizabetta? That was the name of Medora's favorite attendant; one who shared her days of childhood, and who used often to aid us in our little clandestine meetings, ere she became my own. I would like to see her, and this nephew of Don Enrico's. There is something strange in the interest I feel for him. Is it that he is about the age my own sweet babe would have been, had he been spared? Oh God! My child, my lost Medora: my revenge can never wash away the memory of your loss!'

The new disguise of the pirate was now complete, and in the suit of neatly fitting black, the powdered wig and ruffled linen, no one could have recognized the ragged mendicant who had stood in the presence of the governor an hour before.

For a short time longer the doctor awaited the return of Lobo, who could not disguise his astonishment at this new and strange transformation, but the well known voice re-assured him, as the pirate asked:

'Is all right, Lobo?'

'It is, my master; the courier is half drunk already, and expects the celebrated doctor Sangre to meet him immediately at the gate, whence he will guide him to the villa. A horse is awaiting you, and I have already provided a surgeon's valise which is fastened behind your saddle, and will keep up appearances!'

'You are faithful and cunning, Lobo. I have work for you to do in my absence!'

'Lobo is your slave!' was the answer of the negro, who possessed far more intelligence than his appearance would indicate to a careless observer.

'This night the sentinel who guards the door of Don Enrico's chamber, must be strangled, the chamber of the governor entered, and——'

'The dagger?' interrupted the negro, with a smile of savage ferocity.

'No, his time has not come!' answered the pirate, 'but take this paper'—and as he spoke, the pirate drew out a book of tablets, and tearing off a leaf, wrote these words upon it: 'The father of Medora sleeps soundly—let him beware; Solonois is ever near!' then handing it to the negro, added: 'take this paper and lay it upon his bosom. Beware that you are not detected!'

'Lobo will obey his master!' answered the negro, with another hideous grin.

CHAPTER XV.

'O see you that castle, so strong and so high?
And see you that lady, the tear in her eye?
And see you that palmer, from Palestine's land,
The shell on his hat, and the staff in his hand !'

WHEN Luella reached the palace of her father, drenched with rain, pallid and speechless with terror, it was some time before she could sufficiently recover, to despatch assistance to the spot where last she had seen her cousin.

But as soon as she could explain the cause of her terror, servants were despatched, who soon returned bearing the senseless body of Juan, who was dreadfully bruised by the rocks amid which he had fallen.

Elizabetta, the duenna, and as it appeared the acting governess of this country establishment of Don Enrico's, was sadly terrified, and had quickly despatched a courier as we have already learned; but Don Enrico either cared little for his nephew's safety, or else was so engrossed by the terrible news of the last work of the pirate-chief whom he had supposed slain, that he paid scarcely a passing notice to the duenna's letter, and had not Lobo followed the courier and learned his errand, fulfilling the desires of the pirate, Juan might have long waited for a surgeon.

But Lobo had pretended to the courier that

the governor had directed him to send a surgeon of his own choosing, and bade him wait at the gate for Doctor Sangre.

It was considerably past meridian, and the courier, who was considerably elated by the wine which Lobo had managed to get him to swallow, had waited for a considerable time at the gate, and now began to grow exceedingly impatient.

'I wonder what the devil keeps that doctor Sangre, or Sanguinary, or whatever his bloody name is? Hic—I, hic—think he might make a little more haste, seeing it's—hic—I that's waiting here for him; and standing up, holding one's horse up, aint agreeable duty at no time, and particularly when—hic—a gentleman is a little in wine !'

Thus soliloquized the hiccupping courier as he leaned against the stone portals of the gate, and held the bridles of his horse, and the one left in his possession by the negro, as the doctor's.

At last, however, a personage appeared, whose black dress and pompous air at once denoted his profession, and the courier en-

deavored to assume as sober an air as possible.

'Have you been long waiting, my man?' asked the doctor, as he took the bridle of his steed from the courier and mounted.

'Hic—some hours, hic—I believe!' responded the other as he with some little difficulty got upon the back of his own horse.

'Hours, Sir?' responded the doctor, sharply, and in a tone which thrilled through the courier's blood like an ice-chill, effectually scaring away all further symptoms of the hiccups.

'Beg your honor's pardon, Mr. Doctor, but time hangs heavy on one's hands when he's holding a bridle and counting flag-stones. I may be mistaken when I say hours, but—'

'Enough, enough!' impatiently exclaimed the disguised doctor, and then glancing along the Sierra road, down which they were rapidly riding, he added:

'How long will it take us to get to the villa?'

'If we keep up this pace, your honor, we'll be there in about two hours and a half!' responded the man, quite respectfully, for there was something in the air and manner of the doctor, which in spite of himself, and the courage produced by his potations, kept the poor courier in awe.

'How did this accident occur? Relate the particulars!' said the doctor, sternly.

'Why, your honor, it came about in this wise, so far as I heard. Mr. Juan and the young lady, that is Miss Luella, went out about dark to the spirit-rock to hear——'

'The *spirit-rock*! What mean you by that?'

'Why hasn't your honor never heard of the spirit-rock? Every man, woman and four year-old baby about the villa, knows all about it. Its the old castle that nobody has lived in

since about the time of Adam, or a little before, that stands on the hill near Don Enrico's palace, and is haunted by spirits!'

'Old castle—haunted? Is this story a dream that the spirits you've been swallowing has raised?'

'No, your honor, the old castle is haunted, for I saw a ghost there once myself, when I was crossing the park, and it looked about as much like the devil, as ever the old un' looked like himself!'

'How long has this been so?'

'These twenty years, for all I know, your honor!'

'Well, go on, and tell me what has this to do with the accident!'

'Why, your honor, the young lady and gentleman went out to hear the spirit sing, and he, Mr. Juan, took it into his head, that she wasn't a *real* ghost, and so he tried to climb up the rocks, and then a storm come that the spirits raised to drive him away I suppose, and he was cast down and bruised all into a mummy!'

'Does this spirit sing?'

'So I've been told, your honor, but I've never heard her, for ever since I seed the devil there, I've kept as far off from the spot as I could!'

'How do you know that you saw the devil there; what was the object like which so frightened you?'

'It was a wee-bit of a black thing, with great white eyes, shaped more like a toad than a man!'

'Oh, no one has ever seen her, only she is heard to sing sometimes at twilight, and they say that if any body hears her they can't come away till she chooses to let 'em!'

'Strange,—there must be something in this!' muttered the doctor, as he rode rapidly on.

CHAPTER XVI.

'He was so changed; the soft carnation cloud,
Once mantled o'er his cheek like that which eve
Hangs o'er the sky glowing with roseate hue,
Had faded into paleness, broken by
Bright burning blushes, torches of the tomb.'

UPON a couch, in a darkened room, lay Juan, pale, feeble, so much so, that his voice as now and then he tried to speak, could scarce be heard. He was unconscious of his situation, for the injuries he had received had produced a delirium, and to know that his mind was wandering, it was only necessary to hear his words:

'It is not a spirit, I—Luella, dear Luella, it is you that is singing, but why so sadly, when I am near your side!' thus would the youth murmur, and then again he would shudder as if fearful pictures crossed his over-wrought brain.

Elizabetta and Luella, were by his side; the former, nervous and agitated; the latter, pale, tearful and heart-sick, as she gazed upon her suffering relative, whom now, she knew, by his unconscious confessions, loved her; whom she long had loved with that passionate devotion which woman only can hide, and which burns deepest and strongest in its concealment, like a volcano's hidden fire.

'Why doth Roberto stay so long? It seems as if the surgeon for whom I sent never would arrive!' exclaimed Elizabetta, impatiently, as the poor sufferer moaned with pain.

'Surgeon is a spirit—Luella, sing it again, that gentle song; 'The bride and her child were gone, and the light of his heart was flown—' and then again the lips of Juan would close, and he would seem easier for a moment after muttering these broken and incoherent sentences.

The young girl leaned over his pale face, and through her tapering fingers the hot tears trickled and dropped upon his brow.

'The fountain—no 'tis the dew, let us go home, dear cousin, but first let me tell you that I love you—but your father—hark, she sings again! Oh, that is no spirit's voice. I've heard it before, it used to sing me to sleep when I was a babe—ah me, when I was a baby, almost twenty years ago—' and then again the sufferer was still.

While Elizabetta listened to the words of the unconscious speaker, many a strange change came over her countenance. Now of sadness, then of wonder; now of pain and then apparently of pleasure.

'Dear lady:' said she to Luella, 'please see if you can espy the surgeon coming on the river-road, from the watch-tower, and I will watch your cousin till you return!'

The young lady left the apartment, and as her graceful figure passed from the view of the duenna, who had gazed upon her with evident admiration, the latter thus soliloquized:

'She is beautiful! yes, as beautiful as a fond parent could desire, more beautiful I am sure, than would have been the governor's daughter had it lived—and,—well, well aday, but this is a strange world! They both love each other and they think they are cousins. In the first I am satisfied; in the second *they* are deceived. The governor thinks *her* his daughter; in that, *he* is deceived, and I am satisfied; the boy thinks that Don Enrico is his uncle; in which *he* is deceived as well as the rest. So deception is the order of the day with all but me, and I cannot —'

'Roberto is returning and one whom I think is the doctor, it certainly is not my father, is with him!' exclaimed Luella, hastily entering the room at this moment.

'Father—is he not dead—and my mother, she too, no I hear her singing—"They gave him to death with all his charms,—And they tore him away from my clinging arms"—' murmured the sufferer, disturbed by her voice

'He is still letting his mind wander back to that dreadful scene!' sobbed Luella.

'Don't weep, dear lady, the surgeon is here, and your cousin will soon receive the attention which will place him in safety!' said Elizabetta, and then she continued half musingly to herself, 'would that he were safe, safe from the power of —'

Her remarks were interrupted by the entrance of Roberts, who introduced the surgeon.

'Where is the patient?' said the latter, as he entered, bearing his valise upon his arm.

'The father came, from over the main, but his bride was—Luella—dear cousin, that kiss,' and again the murmuring sufferer sank back into silence and his pale lips closed.

'What means the youth? Of what is he speaking?' exclaimed the doctor, sternly, and as Elizabetta heard his voice she started back, and then with a look of curiosity scanned his features, while she answered,

'The poor youth is delirious, sir, and utters all manner of strange things. Have not I met you before, somewhere, sir?'

'Very likely, good woman, very likely, I am well known in the city—well known is doctor Sangre!'

'I have heard the name, but it seems as if we have met, and yet I know not where!' answered the duenna, striving in vain to recall the singular figure, and very red face of the doctor, and also a scar which was partly hidden by a bushy and well powdered wig which he wore.

Meantime the doctor, apparently unconscious of her scrutiny, was engaged in feeling the pulse of his patient, and making a hasty examination of his external injuries.

'No broken bones, I hope?' said he, as he raised one of the sufferer's arms who uttered a deep moan as he felt the touch.

'Oh no, but he is dreadfully bruised, be kind and careful, sir!' said Luella, in tones of deep feeling, and then she blushed as she saw the keen, dark eye of the doctor fixed upon her, with a look which seemed to read her very soul.

'Yes'—continued he, in apparent soliloquy, pretending not to notice her evident confusion,—'contused badly, and shocked much—but there is little danger, give him rest and care, with an opiate to calm his brain, and he will soon recover! He is *the same*;—how handsome, and then he is brave. Why do I feel an interest in him? He looks like my lost Medora, but'—

'They tore him away from my clinging

arms—' muttered the sufferer, turning uneasily in his couch.

'Of what doth he speak?' asked the doctor in such kind calm tones of Luella, that she raised her large dark eyes to his face, as if she thought him a friend, and then she related the occurrences of the evening before to the doctor, and said, that the memories of the spirit's song had seemed to run in her poor cousin's delirious brain ever since.

'Strange—very strange!' muttered the doctor, while he listened to the recital, and then as the young girl closed her narrative, he turned quickly to the duenna, and in a tone which made her start in surprise, spoke:

'Elizabetta!'

She sprung to her feet, exclaiming:

'Sir, you know my name strangely well! Who are you, that I surely have met elsewhere?'

The doctor's tone and manner was again calm and quietly natural as he said:

'Your name I heard from the courier. I would only give some necessary orders in regard to the case of the youth, and then return to the city this evening. I will come again and see him on the morrow!'

'Return to the city to-night? Why sir, it is already nightfall, and the road is difficult!'

'I must return. I hope you will permit the man who guided me here, to return and shew me the road back, and I will send by him some cooling liquids for the young man!' answered the doctor, in the tone of one who was used to having his own way.

'Certainly sir, if it is indeed necessary for you to return, but the villa possesses accommodations—'

'I doubt it not, good Elizabetta!' interrupted the doctor, at the same time opening the valise, and rummaging over various phials and packages, from which he chose one containing a clear, amber colored liquid, which uncorking, he tasted, as if to satisfy himself of its quality; then handing it to the duenna, he added:

'Give him thirty drops of this, bathe his head in any cooling liquid, and disturb not his rest, and he will be better, when I call on the morrow!'

The nurse expressed her compliance, and in a moment more, the strange surgeon had left the apartment, and the clattering hoofs of horses soon announced his departure.

CHAPTER XVII.

'But yet his saddened brow confessed
A passing shade of doubt and awe;
Some fiend was whispering in his breast,
"Beware of injured Bothwell!"'

IT was night. Don Enrico Larranaga slept, but all uneasy was his slumber. Suddenly he was awakened by murmurs of people near the door of his chamber, and ere he could touch the bell which lay within his reach, the officer of the night guard rushed into the room followed by several soldiers, with lights and drawn weapons in their hands.

'Is your excellency safe?' exclaimed the officer, as he entered the room.

'Safe? what mean ye by this excitement?'

'On coming to relieve the sentinel at your door, we found him murdered, and feared that harm had come to your excellency!'

'*Murdered*—' as the governor's eye fell upon a paper which lay upon the couch beside him, he ceased to speak, and as he read it, his face grew pale and he trembled.

'Solonois has been here, here in my chamber!' he shouted. 'Oh, God, where is this fiend? What kind of watch and ward do ye keep, that my very sleeping room may thus be entered by a pirate and assassin?'

'The sentinel at the door is dead!'

'Let the post be doubled. Let this new murder be proclaimed throughout the city, and warning given to all that the murderer is in our midst!'

'Your orders shall be obeyed!' responded the officer.

'And'—continued the governor, 'let it be made known that I will weigh out in gold his own weight, as a reward to whoever will produce this pirate, dead or alive!'

At the moment that this excitement prevailed in the palace, Lobo, the negro hangman, was seated over his fire in his hut, engaged in devouring a hearty supper, as if he had been engaged in an agreeable exercise, which had given him an appetite.

He arose, however, when he heard the clattering of a horse's feet, as it galloped down the street and paused before his door, but ere he could reach the door, Solonois entered.

'Have ye been at the governor's, yet?' asked the pirate.

The negro pulled out the silken bow-string from his bosom, which we have before alluded

to, and as he held it up in the fire-light, answered,

'Lobo has done his master's bidding.'

'The sentinel is dead, and the paper is placed where the governor may read it?'

The negro grinned a horrible assent.

'Then give me wine and food, for I am faint and weary.'

The slave obeyed, and as Solonois proceeded to partake of the refreshment which was placed before him, he continued the conversation,

'Did the governor seem to sleep soundly when you was by his side?'

'No, master. He talked in his sleep.'

'What did he say?'

'Lobo could not make out much, for his words were strange. He spoke of a boy whom he said must die—and he talked of revenge!'

'Ha—revenge? Doth *he*, too, wish for revenge? Well, go on; what more did he say?', cried the pirate, highly excited.

'He spoke of chains and a dungeon, and said *she*, too, must die, but I was afraid the guard would come to relieve the sentinel, and I crept away.'

'*She*? spoke he of a female? did he breathe her name?' Chains and and a dungeon? Oh, God, there is a mystery in this which I must unravel!'

'He spoke no name, my master, but yours. Oh, how I wanted to strangle him, as he lay there in my power, but your orders were—'

'Not yet to harm him. His time has not come, but why do you hate him?'

'He spirited away my boy, my little Quasey!'

'Your boy?'

'Yes, my master; I was married and had a boy, whose mother died when he was born. I *loved* him because every one else *hated* him. He was a dwarf, and more hateful to the eye than I am, who make folks shudder as I pass along!'

'And the governor——'

'Sent for him one day, seventeen years gone by, and Lobo has not seen him since.'

'Seventeen years ago?'

'Yes, my master,' and for a moment, singular as it may appear, the hangman's hideous face assumed an expression most strangely human for him, and two large, bright tears stole down his ebon cheeks, like crystal drops down some blackened rock's dark front.

The pirate noticed it, and with a tone of pity, continued:

'It is just seventeen years since I lost my only boy and a wife—oh, God, my Medora! is it possible that you and my child were sunk beneath the deep, blue waters? Might not *he* have deceived me? Has not his words about the dungeon and chains something to do with this? I will soon unravel this mystery, and that spirit of the rock, too, that must be investigated! Lobo!'

'My master?'

'There will be more excitement in the city in the morning, and I shall leave it early, before it spreads abroad. You must stay and learn all the news you can, and on the third night meet me—you know where there is an old, ruined castle, near the palace of the governor, in the country?'

'Lobo knows where stands the spirit-rock.'

'Well, meet me there on the third night from this, and tell me all that you can learn while I am gone!'

'Shall Lobo choke more Spaniards?' asked the negro, with another hideous grin, as he shook the knotted bow-string which he still held in his hand.

'No, not without it is necessary, at present, but at all risks keep an espial on Don Enrico's actions and words by day and night; and if to do this you must kill, use your dagger, and here—' the pirate again drew forth his tablets, and writing simply these words,

'Solonois! Death to the Spaniards!' upon them, handed them to the negro, and continued, 'Whenever you find it necessary to kill a Spaniard, place one of these papers on his body. Remember my orders!'

'Lobo will be true!' said the negro, and ere he had uttered the words, the former had left the hut.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'Hark! for now a solemn knell
Four times on the still night broke;
Four times at its deadening swell,
Echoes from the ruins spoke.'

IT was midnight, one night later than that which covered the events of our last two chapters.

The governor was in his chamber, but not alone. A short, pale, squalid looking, middle aged man, with small, cold, grey eyes, a low forehead, and a nose as flat as a negro's; stood uncovered before the governor, who sat in his easy chair, and was conversing with this strange looking man, whom he addressed by the name of Stefano.

'What was it that occurred near the old castle three nights ago; I hear that my nephew fell, near there, and was hurt?'

'Yes, your Excellency, and it was well that he did not succeed in his intentions, else all would have been discovered. Perchance his fall saved his own life, for my dagger never yet has failed its owner!'

'Danger of discovery? Stefano, explain your words, and dare not to speak to me in riddles!'

'I speak not in riddles, your excellency. The young man you are pleased to call your nephew, was trying to scale the pathway which leads to the old castle, and his fall alone prevented him from gaining the heights!'

'What took him there? What was his inducement?'

'He had heard the lady sing, and not being scared as all others have been, or deeming her a spirit, he tried to solve his doubts. It is well that he did not know the secret passage, under the rock!'

'Fool, why did you let her sing?'

'I thought there was no harm in it, your excellency; all the people think the rock is haunted, and her feeble voice is not likely to deceive them!'

'Was the lad much hurt by his fall?'

'I know not. He was bloody and senseless, when they came with torches and lifted him from under the rocks and rubbish which had well nigh buried him!'

'And the black dwarf, how does he——ah! heard you not a noise?' and the governor, as he spoke, sprung from his chair and gazed around the room in terror.

'Nothing but the wind moaning through your lattice, I think!' responded the man, and then continued: 'your excellency asked about the negro dwarf. He is still docile and obedient, and seems like a dog, to love and fawn around her, whom you have placed him to serve!'

'Has he any intelligence; is there no danger from him?'

'He has little more sense than a monkey. He never speaks, but all the day sits and looks at his mistress, and at night lays outside of her door and listens to her singing. I believe the ugly little devil never sleeps!'

'Ha! again that noise like the hiss of a serpent close to my ear?' cried the governor, as he sprung from his chair, trembling in every joint, and pale with excess of terror.

'I heard nothing, your excellency, but the wind whistling through yon lattice!' responded the man, gazing nevertheless around the room.

'It must have been my fancy; I have not slept well of late and am nervous!' answered the governor, and then he resumed his seat and conversation.

'There is no danger of her escaping in your absence?'

The man answered with an incredulous smile as he produced three keys: 'This'—(showing a small one covered with rust) 'is the key of the chains which fasten her to the floor;' (then showing a larger one,) 'this locks the door of her dungeon;' (and then holding up the other, he added) 'this locks the outer room, where the little nigger is now, and where her provisions are stored. *She* can travel just the length of her chain; the dwarf has the size of his room for a play ground!'

'It is well. You must keep now a double vigilant watch, but soon your trouble will be over. I shall pay you a visit ere long, and after that you shall live in peace and plenty here in the city the rest of your days!'

'When will your excellency come?'

'Very soon!'

'Will your excellency come alone?'

'No,—the fool who tried to scale your walls and got hurt for his pains, shall attend me, and—'

'What? Surely your excellency will not let him see his——'

'How dare you interrupt me!' exclaimed the governor, angrily. 'I know best how to conduct my own matters;—*he* will accompany me and Lobo the hangman too, but only you and I will leave that spot alive. I have a plan to close a drama which I have been but too long delaying—ah! By heavens, I heard that hiss again. And yet—no, no, 'twas my foolish fancy. I tremble at my own breathing, but soon will I remove all cause of terror. The boy—and *she*, the foul shadow of all my dreams, the only black spot in all our proud escutcheon, and *he* the fiend of blood, all shall die—and—then I am willing to die too!'

The governor, who had almost shouted in his mad excitement, now sunk back in his chair; pale, feeble and almost breathless.

'Shall I not return? It will make me haste to reach there before dawn!' now said the man who had shared in the foregoing conversation.

'Yes, Stefano, go, and whenever you hear my signal, three low whistles, thus'—(Don Enrico whistled three low singular notes) 'then open the secret slide at the foot of the rock, and permit me and my company to enter.

'You shall be obeyed, your excellency!' was the man's answer, and he turned to depart, but paused as Don Enrico again spoke:

'Be careful in future to hush *her* songs, Stefano! If she will not obey you, muffle her!'

'I will see that she is silent, your excellency!' and the speaker departed.

The governor, who seemed exhausted and worn out by the excitement he had undergone and the want of rest, now settled himself back in his easy chair, and in a moment more his

eyes had closed, and his heavy, regular breathing betokened that he was asleep.

Scarcely had Don Enrico's eyes closed, ere the curtains which shrouded a little alcove close by his side, were moved apart, and the hideous face of Lobo, the negro hangman peered out, with an expression so fiendish, that it would be impossible to describe it. He had evidently heard every word that had been spoken.

Silently and carefully he advanced toward the sleeping old man, and as he bent over him he drew a broad bright dagger from his bosom, raised it over the heart of the defenceless governor, and then for an instant his face seemed to grow wilder and darker in its expression of ferocity; he raised his hand still higher and seemed to be choosing the exact spot wherein to plant the deadly blade, but at the moment when it seemed as if the dagger was actually descending to the heart of his victim, a look of deep cunning took the place of his more fiendish expression, and putting back the dagger in its sheath, he drew from beneath his vesture one of the papers which Solonois had given him and placing it in the unclosed hand of Don Enrico, spat twice directly in the eyes of the sleeper, and then with a light bound sprang behind the curtain where he had before been concealed.

The governor, seeming even in his sleep conscious of the indignity which had been perpetrated upon him, awoke, sprung from his chair, and then saw the paper which he had clenched closer as he arose. He raised it to his view, glanced upon the fearful words, recognised that well-known hand writing, then while his face paled with terror, and his limbs tottered so that he scarce could move across the room, he staggered to the door and fled through it, screaming as he went,

'What ho—the guard! the guard! Solonois is here—the guard!'

The instant that the governor left the room,

the negro sprang to the lattice, through which he had probably entered, and in a moment had disappeared, leaving not a trace by which his entry, presence or departure could be detected.

Soon the room was filled with soldiers, who had been alarmed by the terrified governor, but when they found no sign of any one in the room, they thought some strange dream had shaken his feeble nerves.

But as he gazed upon the paper which he still retained in his hand, he knew that it was no *dream*, and he trembled lest the eye of his dreadful enemy was even then upon him.

'Oh holy God! why am I thus tormented! The very spirits of hell must be leagued to aid him!' groaned the miserable man; and then he gave orders to search the whole palace and the surrounding grounds, ordering however, a guard to remain in the room with him.

The search was made, but soon the guard returned and made their report. None but the household of the governor could be found; no one had passed the sentinels, not a trace of an intruder could be seen anywhere.

The governor raved and stamped in his furious disappointment. He could not endure that his own guard should, as they evidently did, deem him the cowardly victim of some strange dream, or some nervous delusion.

'Read that!' he shouted, as he handed the paper in his hand to an officer whose face wore an expression of incredulity: read that, sir, and see what kind of watch my guards keep over my life!'

The officer read the words, and then his face too turned pale, as he said in agitated tones:

'The fiends of hell must be leagued with him!'

'In future let my palace walls be lined with soldiers. Post double sentinels at every avenue!' said the governor, who gradually became more composed.

CHAPTER XIX.

'She gazed upon the inner court,
Which in the tower's tall shadow lay ;
Where coursers' clang, and stamp, and snort,
Had rung the live-long yesterday ;
Now still as death ;—till, stalking slow,—
The jingling spurs announced his tread,—
A stately warrior passed below ;
But when he raised his plumed head—
Blessed Mary ! can it be !—
Secure, as if in Ousenam bowers,
He walks through Branksome's hostile towers,
With fearless step and free.
She dare not sign, she dare not speak—
Oh ! if one page's slumbers break,
His blood the price must pay !'

THERE is something about that man which I cannot account for ; I certainly have met him in other times. His voice and eye are surely such as I have heard and seen elsewhere !' was the remark of Elizabetta to the Lady Luella, as they sat by the bedside of Juan, who was still in the calm, placid slumber, which the opiate which had been administered to him the night before had produced.

They were speaking of the surgeon who had attended on the evening before.

'He seemed gentle and skilful ; I remarked nothing singular in his actions or appearance,' responded the young lady ; and then as she looked at the patient's returning color, she added, 'my cousin certainly is better.'

'Yes, I doubt not of this physician's skill, but to me there is a mystery. I ought to know, and still I cannot remember him.'

'Is it not time that he returned ? He said that he would come back in the morning.'

'Yes, for the sun is already three or four hours high in the heavens. Hark ! I hear the clattering of hoofs ; is not that his steed ?'

The young lady hastened to the window, but a look of disappointment gathered over her beautiful face, while she remarked that it was only Roberto.

'He probably has brought some message ; at least he may be able to tell me who this Doctor Sangre is !' exclaimed the duenna, and started toward the door, probably intending to interrogate him, but was saved any further trouble in finding him, by the appearance of the courier himself at the door of the apartment, who was evidently in his favorite situation ; that is, considerably elated with wine.

'Where is the doctor, Roberto ?' asked the duenna, and her voice was loud as thunder and sharp as nettle-juice when she spoke, for she saw that he was drunk.

'Doctor Roberto, most illustrious Eliza-

betta—hic is here—but if you mean Doctor Sangre, or Sanguinary, or whatever his bloody name is—the savage speaking chap that gets mad so easy, and wears black knee-breeches and—

‘Why don’t you answer me, fool? You’ve been at the wine bottle again!’ exclaimed she, angrily.

‘You’re becoming hic—madame, hic,—decidedly personal—when you talk to me of fools and bottles, but I have got a bottle, and its contents isn’t fit to drink, for I’ve tried ’em and they’re as hic—bitter as garlic. The bloody doctor told me to bring it to young master Juan and he’d come himself before long; so you see I’m his *avant courier*, d’ye see the point, eh, most illustrious Senora?’

‘Either begone, or act decently, sir! Do you know who this Doctor Sangre is?’

‘I can tell you, if it is necessary, woman,’ said the very person alluded to, who had just arrived and now suddenly presented himself before her.

‘Oh heaven preserve me, it is the devil—I beg your pardon, sir; you took me so by surprise!’ screamed the duenna, as she quailed beneath the stern glance of his dark bright eye, and heard his deep, cold voice.

Without heeding her apology he passed to the bedside of the youth, and regarding his features attentively, felt his pulse, at the same time remarking to the Lady Luella:

‘Your cousin is better, lady.’

‘Yes, thanks to heaven, and the soothing medicine you gave him!’

‘Has he rested ever since?’

‘He has, and has not spoken, nor been troubled with those strange visions.’

‘It is well. He will soon awake, and the room must be rendered very dark. He will only require rest, quiet and care now.’

‘Oh, sir, it gives me happiness, to think he will so soon recover, for much do I blame myself for causing this injury to him, by persuading him to go, and hear the spirit’s song.’

‘Then you *do* believe that the song you

heard was from a spirit unseen and not from mortal lips?’

‘Yes, sir, for never could such touching melody, strains so sad and yet so sweet have issued from mortal lips.’

‘Oh, lady, you never heard my lost Medo—’ the doctor paused at this moment, for he saw the keen eye of Elizabetta fixed full upon him, and as he paused and glanced with his dark bright eyes upon her, she turned ashy pale, and sunk fainting into a seat near the couch of Juan.

‘Stay, lady,’ cried the doctor to Luella, who was about to call assistance, ‘I can recover her.’

‘Oh, where is he, the dread—’ said she, as a moment afterwards she opened her eyes, but the hissing whisper, as he bent down apparently to administer a drug—silenced her half-uttered disclosure. ‘Hush! if you value life, hush!’ he whispered.

‘Leave us for a moment, if you please, young lady,’ said the doctor to Luella, as the duenna began to recover.

The duenna would have spoken and begged the lady to remain, but that fearful eye was upon her, and her lips were closed.

Luella, wondering at the strangeness of the scene, obeyed the desire of the doctor and glided from the apartment.

‘Elizabetta, you have discovered me?’

The look of the terror-stricken woman would have been sufficient answer, but with a trembling voice, she answered:

‘Oh spare me, thou dreadful man! I never will betray thee, and thou shalt know all.’

Elizabetta, is Medora dead?’

‘So help me heaven, I do not know, but I believe that yet she lives.’

‘My boy?’

‘Behold him there!’ and the woman pointed to the couch where rested the sleeping youth.

‘Oh, holy heaven, hath not my heart ere this told me so, in the strange interest I have felt for him? Elizabetta, twice spared I that boy in battle!’

While the pirate spoke, his eye erst so

wild and fearful filled with bright warm tears, and he did not seem like one who could tear away life from man as if it were a worthless bauble, and look upon blood as a seaman gazes on the water through which his swift bark proudly glides, and yet this was 'Solonois, the fiend of blood.'

The woman seemed somewhat recovered from her terror as she saw the tears steal down his pale cheek, and she said, timidly:

'They said you were slain in the last battle.'

'Ay, but I was not, as you now can see! I still am well and powerful, and—' the pirate frowned again as he spoke, and the woman turned pale and trembled beneath that look, while he continued, 'able to punish traitors!'

'Oh fear not that I who so love the memory of my lost lady will betray you. I have protected that sleeping boy twice from the murderous hand of his grandsire, who would have slain him in his helpless infancy.'

'Noble Elizabetta! You shall well be rewarded; but that girl, that fair and gentle being who so loves him, is she in truth a relative to him?'

'No, she is—forgive me if I do not now tell you who she is; but she is thought by Don Enrico to be the daughter of his last wife who died in child-bed, and whose child died within a few hours after its birth, when this was substituted in its place, and has been reared as the governor's daughter.'

'It is well, you may for the present keep that secret, for I have other mysteries to unravel now. You said that you thought my Medora yet lived?'

'I do so believe. Because he, the governor, has never told me that she was dead, though he has often said he only spared the boy to finish his plans of vengeance.'

'Why has he taught the boy to believe himself a nephew?'

'To suit his own dark views! I am the only one in the secret, and my death would surely follow his knowledge of my betrayal of his secret.'

'Fear not, Elizabetta, you now are under my protection, and though he is powerful, he trembles whenever he hears my name breathed. Be silent and cautious in all things not to show even to my son, the least suspicion of the real state of affairs, and soon will I unravel the mystic thread, soon dispel the clouds of mystery! I, too, believe that my lost Medora lives, and perchance there yet is peace and joy in store for me.'

'Luella shall not lose her place and heritage?' asked the woman in a sad and supplicating tone.

'No, your secret is safe, and let everything now pass on in quiet, as if nothing had occurred. My noble boy has proved his bravery even upon mine own person, and I long to clasp him to my arms, but it must not be yet.'

'I fear his grandsire!' said Elizabetta.

'Fear? Am I not here now to watch over and guard him? Let Don Enrico beware how he pushes his plans of vengeance! He will now find himself foiled at every point, and if Medora lives, then once more will Solonois learn how to smile—and how to spare a Spaniard!'

CHAPTER XX.

'The Knight and Ladye fair are met,
And under the hawthorn's boughs are met.
A fairer pair were never seen
To meet beneath the hawthorn green.
He was stately, and young, and tall;
Dreaded in battle, and loved in hall:
And she, when love, scarce told, scarce hid,
Lent to her cheek a livelier red;
When the half sigh her swelling breast
Against the silken ribband pressed;
When her blue eyes their secret told,
Though shaded by her locks of gold—
Where would you find the peerless fair,
With Margaret of Branksome might compare?'

'OH, thank God! that you can again speak and look upon me, dear cousin!' said Luella, tenderly, as a few hours after the strange discovery in our last chapter, she was sitting by the side of his couch, answering some of his many inquiries, for all things had been as chaos to him from the moment when the rocks gave way beneath his feet, as he was clambering up the precipice.

'I feel very weak yet, dear Luella; I feel light as if my head was stuffed with feathers and my body inflated like a cloud.'

'A most singular feeling, dear cousin, but how did you feel when you fell?'

'Well, I scarcely remember, but it seems to me that I have a dim recollection of a

feeling like thumping upwards against the sky, and knocking my head against at least a million of stars.'

'You were so foolish, dear Juan, to try to climb that impassable height, and I am sure you were not very gallant to leave me alone in the darkness and storm to go in search of a spirit.'

'I'm sure it was a proof of my *spirit*, cousin, and now while we speak——'

'It is always a sure sign of a speedy recovery when a patient dares to venture upon a joke or a pun,' said a voice close beside them, which interrupted the remarks of the invalid. The speaker was the surgeon, who had stolen in unnoticed upon them.

'This is the kind doctor, dear Juan, to whom you are partly indebted for your speedy

recovery,' said Luella, as she saw the look of inquiry which her cousin's countenance assumed.

'Then I cheerfully give him the thanks which his skill and kindness deserve,' said the youth, at the same time closely regarding the physician, as if he, too, like the duenna, had a dim recollection of having seen him before.

But his look gradually turned upon the face of his fair cousin, and the youth gave no further signs of recognition.

The father had steadily watched each muscle of his son's face during this time, for he feared a recognition, and he did not wish then to be known, and least of all did he wish to be known as Solonois the pirate. He had therefore purposely tested the memory of the young invalid by this voluntary interview, and now was joined by Elizabetta, who had been watching from the door-way, the effect of the meeting, with fear and trembling.

She feared not, nor did Solonois fear the discovery that he was the boy's *parent*; they twain alone possessed the secret, but Juan had heard the pirate's voice as it rung loud and clear in the battle-shout, and had seen his eye as it flashed amid the gleaming arms, and they feared that memory might have kept some trace that would betray him.

But now that fear was past, and the parties entered into a cheerful, desultory conversation, which soon was continued between the two youngest, who still supposed themselves cousins; Elizabetta and the doctor having retired.

'Have you heard any of these strange legends about the spirit-rock, Elizabetta?' said the disguised doctor, as they passed out into the balcony, after leaving the invalid and his consin.

'I have heard it often spoken of, but never

have taken particular note of it until lately,' answered the duenna.

'I know not why, but it seems to me that there is something connected with that spot which bodes important things to me of good or evil. Had not my son fallen in attempting to scale its heights, I should not have come hither to be discovered by you, and to thus find him.'

'It is true, but you, so brave and fearless, you do not believe in spirits?'

'No; therefore I deem that there is something about that rock and the supposed spirit which is worth investigating. The reports say that a voice has been heard to sing there at night.'

'Yes, it was to listen to this wild song that Luella and Juan went on the night when by his rashness he was so badly injured.'

'I am aware of it, and must myself hear that song and be satisfied if it be a spirit or not from whose lips it issues.'

'I hope that there will be no danger, but I am told that the place is in ruins, and that it is utterly impossible to ascend the precipice. You can see the ruin from here, and behold how it is perched upon the very peak of the cliffs.'

'Is it that upon which the setting sun is now casting its last rich rays, where something like a tower looms up amongst the trees?'

'That is the spot. I have often sat here with dear Luella, in the cool of the sweet summer evenings, and as the distant view was softened by the twilight, wondered with her what could ever have induced the old owners of this soil to make their home upon those inaccessible rocks, as doth the eagle when she builds her nest!'

'I am glad that I have marked the spot; I soon shall visit it!' answered the pirate.

CHAPTER XXI.

'Use lessons marvel, it is said.
This elvish Dwarf with the Baron staid;
Little he ate, and less he spoke,
Nor mingled with the menial flock;
And oft apart his arms he tossed,
And often muttered, "Lost! lost! lost!"
He was waspish, arch, and lithorlie,
But well Lord Cranstoun served he:
And he of his service was full fain;
For once he had been ta'en or slain,
An' it had not been his ministry.
All, between Home and Hermitage,
Talked of Lord Cranstoun's Goblin page.'

IT was on the morning after his last fearful fright, which we have described in a previous chapter, that Don Enrico sent at an early hour for Lobo the hangman.

The messenger had not long been despatched, before the negro, wearing his usual look of beastly stupidity stood before him.

'Lobo is his master's slave!' said the hideous being, as he tried to smile, making much such a laugh as that very interesting animal, the 'laughing hyena' would when stirred up with the showman's 'long pole' in a menagerie cage.

'Ah—yes, I sent for you, Lobo, to —' the governor frowned as he observed the messenger whom he had sent for the negro, and turning to him, sternly said: 'begone, sir, I wish no eaves-droppers at my elbow!'

Then as the room was deserted by all save himself and the negro, he continued: 'Lobo you know ~~that~~ So. onois lives; yes, is even here in our midst

'Folks say that him or his ghost is here killing Spaniards!'

'It is him, not his ghost; ghosts don't write, or drive daggers into men's hearts' would you fear him, were you to meet him Lobo?'

'Lobo is afraid of ghosts, but he never was scared by live men. He hang too many for that!' and the negro chuckled horribly as his mind ran over the '*many*' to whom he alluded.

'Do you think you would know the pirate, if you were to meet him disguised? You certainly ought to remember him, you have

seen him in such peculiar circumstances !'

'If Lobo see his eye, he know it. Solonois got a devil's eye !'

'Yes, and a devil's heart too. I want you now to disguise yourself as much as you can, so that nobody will know you, Lobo, and keep up a search for this fiend till he is found ! Find him, and I'll give you his weight in gold, and you shall have the pleasure of hanging him, by way of a prelude to that other little pleasant job, which I've in store for you !'

'Will you give me back my boy, my Quasey, if I find Solonois ?' asked the negro, with a strange expression of cunning in his red glaring eyes.

'I've told you long since that the boy had run away, or been stolen. Why do you remember him. He was only a trouble to you, an unsightly brat, whom you dared not show in the street, for fear the people would stone him to death !' responded the governor, impatiently.

'Lobo loved his Quasey, if everybody else *did* hate him !' replied the negro, again exhibiting the singular signs of feeling, which we once before have noted.

'Well, well, you might as well forget him ! He's gone !'

'Think Quasey's dead ?' again asked the negro, and there was a cunning in his eye as he spoke, that would have been apt to have awakened suspicion in Don Enrico's heart, had one particle been resting there, in regard to the negro.

But it is said that where one is deeply engaged in deceiving others, he is more easily deceived himself, and so it appeared in this case, for he carelessly answered,

'Oh yes, I've no doubt of it, dead and buried long ago !'

'In some cave or dungeon, where bad men put slaves !' said the negro, bitterly, but as

Don Enrico started at the words, turned suddenly and sought to read the reason of these strange words, the negro's face assumed its usual appearance of beastly stupidity, and the governor thought that his words were without meaning.

He, however, made no more allusions to the dwarf, but asked of the negro :

'What do the people say about the pirate, Lobo ?'

'They're scared great deal, and they think it's his ghost come to haunt us !' replied the negro, with an air of consummate stupidity.

'They are fools ! When they find dead men about their streets with his name and mark upon them, they still think it is his ghost. Can ghosts hang folks, eh, or stab them ?' asked the nervous governor.

'Lobo don't know. Lobo is afraid of ghosts. They come at night and pull Lobo's nose and spit on him !'

As the negro made this last remark, his red eyes gleamed almost hellishly, for he saw that his words rankled in the governor's breast, but still Don Enrico had no thought that there was a hidden meaning in the language of the negro, or that the latter, or any human being beside the insulter himself, had known of the indignity which he had received, for he had not mentioned to the guard when he had alarmed them on the previous night, how he had been made aware of the presence of the supposed pirate.

'It is foolish to believe in ghosts. It is only dreams that trouble you—but you may go now, and remember if you find Solonois, you are rich for the rest of your life !'

'Me rather think shall find little Quasey, before governor finds the pirate !' muttered the negro as he turned away and left the apartment of the governor, who did not hear the remark.

CHAPTER XXII.

'So passed the day—the evening fell,
'Twas near the time of curfew bell ;
The air was mild, the wind was calm,
The stream was smooth, the dew was balm ;
E'en the rude watchman, on the tower,
Enjoyed and blessed the lovely hour.'

ON the night when Solonois had directed Lobo to meet him upon the spot known as the spirit-rock, the former had stolen forth unobserved from the villa, and aided by the light of a clear moon had gained the little moss plat beneath the very verge of the precipice, which was crested by the ruined castle.

He had come early in hopes to hear something of the sounds which had made the spot so terrible to the peasantry, but he had remained until after midnight and still heard not a sound save the dash of the cascade, or the rustling of the waving tree-limbs that were shook by the gentle breeze.

'It is strange that Lobo does not come!' he muttered, as he tramped up and down along the yielding moss, and knew that the hour was past, but ere the words had passed his lips he heard a low hiss in the shade of the rock behind him, so like the hiss of a serpent that he involuntarily shuddered, as he turned and looked in the direction whence it came.

The noise was repeated, and then the pirate saw something move. It apparently was a human being, and as it crawled out into the edge of the moonlight and beckoned with its hand for him to approach, he recognized the negro.

'Why do you keep back in the shade? What do ye fear?' said Solonois impatiently, as he approached the negro, who was making signs of silence and caution.

'Hist! folks hear us if we make a noise,' whispered the negro in answer.

'Who will hear? It is half a mile to the villa!'

'Folks live in spirit-rock close by. Lobo will tell his master strange things by-and-by, if he only come away from here now, where folks can't hear him talk.'

Astonished by the manner of the negro, Solonois followed him along under the shadow of the cliff quite a distance from the rock upon which stood the old castle, and then the negro paused and for the first time spoke louder than a whisper.

'Lobo knows where is his Quasey, he thinks!' was the first expression of the negro after he stopped.

'Well, where is he? What news have you?'

'Lobo got great deal of news. Scare governor most to death—spit in governor's face—see white man tell governor all about the spirit-rock, and know how to make rock open and find Quasey and lady that sings!'

'What mean you, Lobo? speak plainly and tell me all!' exclaimed Solonois, who could not comprehend the rapid utterance of the negro, who now more calmly and regularly told his story:

'You told Lobo to watch governor while you come away to the country to see the young governor, master Juan?'

'Yes, go on!' hastily answered the pirate.

'Well, Lobo go and hide in governor's bed-room, and by-and-by a little ugly white man come and tell governor a heap of strange things. He talk about the spirit-rock, and talk about a lady that he has got chained there, and a little negro dwarf that I know is my Quasey, and then the governor talk about killing 'em all and me, too, and give the man a signal to let him into the rock, and then when the man went away, governor went to

sleep, and then Lobo go and spit in his face and put your speaking-paper in his hand, and he get scared and run away to call the guard, and then Lobo creep out of the garden and come away too.'

'By heavens, there is something in this, though I cannot yet all comprehend your strange story,' said Solonois; 'and he spoke of a lady in the spirit-rock, who is chained there! It must be, it is my lost Medora! Lobo, what is the signal? I will even now fly to the cursed spot!'

'Be careful, my master!' responded the polite negro; 'My Quasey is there too, but we must be careful and go to work like fox, then we'll be sure!'

'True—true, my faithful fellow, and it soon will be daylight. We will return to the villa, where you can more fully explain this strange news to me, and we can arrange a plan of action to guide our future steps.'

'Must hide Lobo so folks can't see him! Country folks hate the hangman!' and the negro smiled as he thought of the fear his hideous appearance created.

'Yes—yes, you shall be concealed until to-night, and then—then this mystery shall be cleared.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

'With gentle hand and soothing tongue,
She bore the leech's part;
And, while she o'er his sick-bed hung,
He paid her with his heart.'

DEAR Luella, I think with the aid of your arm, I have strength to reach the little honeysuckle bower at the end of the balcony. I do so wish to look upon the flowers and hear the glad birds sing!' said Juan, feebly, to his cousin, as the bright morning's sun stole in through the half drawn curtains of his room.

With a glad smile she readily gave her assent, and leaning on her arm he tottered forth. Oh who would pine or fret at being sick, if he had one so good and gentle, one so fair and loving, to cheer his moments of pain, to fan his fevered cheeks, and cheer his sinking heart. 'Oh, how true the poet's words to woman:

'When anguish wrings the brow
A ministering angel thou!'

The twain, the loving and the loved, gained the favorite bower, and seated themselves where they could gaze upon the beautiful country around.

As they look toward the old ruins, the scene of Juan's late mischance, Luella turned pale, but his eye brightened as he said:

'I long to regain my strength, dear cousin, that once more and with greater care I can proceed to unravel the mysteries of the spirit-rock!'

'Surely—' said she, and she shuddered as she spoke, 'surely you do not intend ever to return to that terrible spot, which already has proved so nearly fatal to you?'

'In truth I do, dear Luella, for that song still lingers in my mind, as a strain which I cannot forget, dare not forget! There is a mystery in it, a something connected with my fate, which I must and will divine!'

'Oh my cousin, let me beseech you to avoid the dreadful place!'

'Why, surely there can be no danger, when in the clear light of day I can thread the passage, and avoid the dangers, which in the night-storm I could not see!'

'Oh yes, dear cousin, I feel that there are dangers, which no mortal can avoid. The spirit—'

'Oh go to—my fair cousin!' said the youth, playfully interrupting her: 'I believe not in spirits, that voice was of earth, although it was so heavenly sweet that I—'

'Fell in love with it, and now care more for it than for your poor cousin who would die for you!' sobbed the fair girl.

'No, dear Luella, no, it is not love—it is a high and holy awe, a charm which I cannot express, which seems like an invisible power continually to be bidding me return and hear that voice. I feel as if there was something intimately connected with my fate in that voice—and there hath always been a mystery hanging over me, which your stern father, my uncle, never would satisfy.

'When I have questioned him about my parents, he has ever fretfully answered with few words and briefer manner, that they died while I was yet a babe; if I asked him what

heritage they had left me, or who and what my father was, he coldly told me that I was his nephew, and not to question him more !'

'Forgive my father for his sternness, he is even cold to me, but the cares and toils of business perplex him ever, and should be his excuse !'

'He has forbidden me to love you, Luella !'

'Then he is cruel, oh God, how cruel !' sobbed the girl, as she buried her beautiful and blushing face in her small white hands.

'But dear cousin, sweet Luella, I am not his slave, I do, and will love you forever !' cried the youth, and as she looked up then, smiling in her tears, like a dew-laden flower covered with the rosy light of the newly risen sun, oh, how peerlessly beautiful did she appear !

We cannot stay with them any longer, reader, for such scenes make one feel like falling in love himself, just as to look upon a beautiful picture causes one to desire to become a painter.

But there had been witnesses to all this scene.

Solonois and Elizabetta had overheard each word, and it was only when a sound like the gentle meeting of a little infant's hands when placed softly together in its joy, a sound—oh ladies ! you've heard the sound, which no other sound is exactly like, and which, though easy to make where lips are red and fresh and warm and willing, is as indescribable as its pleasure ; it was only when this thrilling sound followed the youth's last declaration, that they silently passed on beyond the hearing of the lovers.

'It is well for their happiness, that they are not so nearly related as Don Enrico believes them !' said the duenna, as soon as herself and companion were beyond the hearing of the young couple, and then as she looked around the garden where they were walking, and saw that they were alone, she added : 'you sent me word that you wished to converse with me ; there is now no one near to listen to us.'

'Elizabetta !' responded the other, 'do you

yet love the memory of your lost lady, my Medora ?'

'Oh sir, why need you ask that ? The care I have taken of her child will best prove that !'

'How came he by that scar which is upon his cheek ?'

'His grand-sire told me that when he tore the babe from its mother's arms, he dashed it upon the rock.'

'And then she deemed that it was slain ?'

'I know not—for never would he utter a word to me concerning her ! He brought the babe to me and with many fearful threats consigned it to my care, saying that it must in future pass as his nephew, and that he spared it but to fill the measure of his fell revenge.'

'Your lady lives !'

'Oh God of heaven be praised—and yet, oh do not deceive me !'

'I do not deceive you, without I am myself deceived ! This night shall solve all mysteries.'

'This night ? Oh please explain to me your meaning.'

The pirate now explained to her all that he had gathered after a close examination of the negro, and she at once exclaimed,

'Yes, it must be her, for now I have the key to a thousand strange expressions which have fallen from his lips, but how can you, who if you were known, would be hunted as a beast of the forest—how can you rescue her ?'

'Fear no difficulty in that, Elizabetta, but can you easily conceal the lady Medora for a few days, if this night I find and bring her hither ?'

'Oh yes ! There are many apartments in the palace, which are never entered, and that wing which reaches beyond the balcony where we left the young lady and her lover, is unoccupied !'

'Then be at the entrance to the garden, from midnight until I return to night ! Lobo and myself, will bring the chained lady, whoever she may be, or die in the attempt.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

'Stearnly he spoke—" 'Tis sweet to hear,
In good green-wood the bugle blown ;
But sweeter to Revenge's ear,
To drink a tyrant's dying groan.
Whose cheek is pale, whose eye-balls glare,
As one, some visioned sight that saw,
Whose hands are bloody, loose his hair !—
—" 'Tis he ! 'tis he ! 'tis Bothwellhaugh ! " "

A GAIN it was night. In the governor's private chamber was a conclave of officers in deep consultation, and their low tones and pale cheeks might almost have told the subject of their conference.

'I have called ye together, gentlemen, to have your assistance in devising some means to capture the fearful fiend of blood, who is again in our midst.'

'If gold will not win some one to betray him, it will be the first time it ever failed, even from the days of Judas till now,' responded one of the officers.

'There is but one thing more powerful than gold !' added another.

'And that ?' said Don Enrico.

'Is *fear* ! If he were known, if he has men of his band around him, they would fear to betray one so terrible. If he were to stand here in our midst, I am almost inclined to doubt if one would dare to seize him !'

'Would to God that he was here—and if

ye all were cowards, mine own hand should shame you—ha ! what was that ? Did you hear it ?' exclaimed the governor, as he sprang from his chair, and trembling in every limb, gazed with pallid face and glaring eyes around.

'We heard nothing, your excellency !' responded one who stood nearest him.

'I heard a voice whisper, "*Medora—revenge !*" as plainly as I hear ye speak, gentlemen, and did I not know each man before me, I should deem that you were trifling with the nerves of an old man, or that a traitor or villain was amongst ye !'

'It must have been a fancy of your excellency's ; we surely would have heard any voice, but we will search the palace, however, if you—'

'No, gentlemen, if so many sentinels cannot guard my chamber from intrusion, and I am again visited as I have been, I shall think that Solonoi is leagued with the devil, and

yield to fate—but now to business. I have sent for you because I know each of you to be true, intelligent and brave. I have a plan for finding out this pirate and his horde, for I know that some of his band must be here to support him in his daring, and in this duty ye will have conspicuous parts to act.'

'We are ready to do our duty,' was the unanimous response.

'I thank you for that readiness, gentlemen. My plan is this: Disguise yourselves as seamen, beggars, and persons of the lowest order, and first associating a set of secret signals which ye alone may understand, mingle amongst the lower classes. Hunt up the dens of thieving, and pretend to join in the villanies and debaucheries of their inmates. In this way you may, by attaching yourselves to, and thus finding out the real character of every suspicious person, possibly discover him, or at least some of his gang, and if they are discovered the rack shall—ha! again those words! or was it my fancy that misled me?' As the governor made this last exclamation, he again sprung from his seat with an expression of terror, but resumed it when he noticed that his officers looked upon him with surprise, and continued,

'This will not be a very agreeable duty, gentlemen, but its success will be of immeasurable benefit to our country, and the reward shall be commensurate with the peril and the merit!'

'The plan is good, but dangerous!' said several voices.

'Then so much the more worthy of the men to whom I entrust it!' said the governor,

and then as they arose, he said: 'I leave you to act in this for yourselves, gentlemen; you all know my wishes, and we know, alas, but too well, that the pirate is yet alive and somewhere in our very midst! Farewell!'

The governor was alone. When his officers left him, he paced to and fro along his floor, starting ever and anon, as if he thought that unseen assassins filled the air, and as he walked, he breathed a low soliloquy, from which we may gather his train of thought.

'It is time to end the drama!' said he. 'Yes, the boy has arrived at an age when he can feel the blow; she, too, has suffered all the misery that life can give, and when she sees and knows him once more, and then finds but to lose him in death, for she—she shall see him die, then will my revenge—no, never will I be revenged till Solonois is in my power! Oh, God, that the fiend were now before me!'

'Have then your wish! Medora! Juan! Revenge!' cried a voice close by his side, and as with one wild glance of terror the governor turned, he beheld the dread pirate chief standing almost over him, his tall form quivering with excitement, his dark eyes gleaming with rage, his whole face expressive of terrible anger, and his right hand held aloft the same golden-hilted dagger which Don Enrico had left in the flag-staff on the pirate's rock, seventeen years before.

'Mercy, oh, God—lost!' gasped the governor, as he glanced upon this frightful visitor, and then sunk senseless and powerless to the floor.

CHAPTER XXV.

'By a steel-clenched postern door,
They entered now the chancel tall;
The darkened roof rose high aloof
On pillows, lofty, light, and small;
The key-stone, that locked each ribbed aisle,
Was a fleur-de-lys, or a quatre-feuille;
The corbells were carved grotesque and grim,
And the pillars, with clustered shafts so trim,
With base and with capital flourished around,
Seemed bundles of lances which garlands had bound.
Full many a scutcheon and banner, riven,
Shook to the cold night-wind of heaven,
Around the screened altar's pale.'

I AM now ready, Lobo. Do you think you remember the exact signal which the governor made, and which will gain admission to the "secret passage" of which you heard them speaking?'—

'Lobo remembers. It was thus;' answered the negro, at the same time repeating in exact imitation the whistle which he had heard from the lips of the governor.

'It is well, Lobo, here are arms for you,'—responded Solonois, at the same time offering the negro a dagger and pair of pistols, which

he refused to take, simply saying, as he drew his knotted bow-string from his bosom and shook it before the pirate's eyes:

'Lobo don't need dagger; this makes no noise, and kills as quick!'

'Well, well, be it as you like, yet we may have a struggle, especially if any fault in the signal betrays us, for I enter that ruined castle and ferret out all its mysteries this night, or death alone shall prevent me. Come, the hour is late, and my soul is impatient!'

Solonois had dressed himself with care in a dress precisely like that which he had worn when he last parted from his loved Medora; the same weapons, the same ornaments. In all things save a pale, scarred, furrowed and care-worn visage, and hair that once was dark and soft and like the raven's glossy wing, now turned partly grey, Solonois looked the same. His eye in wrath was still terrible; in mildness still soft, liquid and lovely; his voice could still breathe love's low melody, or make the air groan with his dreadful battle cry; his hand was still sure and steady, his step firm and buoyant, as when in the pride of his first manhood, he trod his springing deck.

But ere he stepped out in the clear moonlight on his way to the spirit-rock, he enveloped his form in a huge sea-cloak which effectually concealed his manly figure, his weapons and his dress, and as with Lobo similarly disguised he cautiously stole forth from the villa it was not likely that either could have been recognised. The moon was shining brightly, casting long and fantastic shadows from tree and rock and hill, but the two strode swiftly toward the spirit-rock, keeping in the range of shade, so as entirely to avoid the danger of observation in those directions. They soon gained the low mossy knoll which in a previous chapter we have described, and here in the deep shadows of the cliff above paused, and examined the appearance of things around them.

The cliff did not at their front reached with a smooth and unbroken front up to the crest whereon stood the ruins of the old castle; a little farther to the left was the ruined and now filled up path where Juan had attempted to ascend, but this was now utterly impassable.

'Try the signal, Lobo!' said the pirate, 'by it we may find the entrance, although I can here see no sign of any passage by which we may gain the rock!'

The negro instantly gave the low peculiar whistles which he had heard, and then for an instant both awaited the result in silence and suspense.

'Had you not better try it once more?' said the pirate; but ere Lobo could obey his desire, a similar whistle was heard from the crest of the rock directly above where they stood in darkness so dense that their forms could not have been distinguished.

Lobo instantly answered it in exact imitation, and then for several minutes all was still.

Solonois began to grow impatient, and to fear that he had been detected, when suddenly a gleam of light shot out directly from the face of the rock upon them, and they saw a part, which before had appeared solid opened and a voice dull and husky was heard from the aperture:

'Is that your excellency?'

All might still have been lost by the discovery that the governor was not there, had not Lobo instantly sprang forward and answered:

'Yes, master, and Lobo is here with the young gentleman!'

The voice within answered: 'well, come in, I've been on the look-out for some time for you.'

But it had not been necessary for the invitation; the form of the stalwart negro was already within the narrow passage, which was formed by a shelf of thick rock, so fixed as to turn on a pivot, and the next instant a half-choked curse, a heavy fall, and a momentary struggle was heard within. The pirate rushed into the aperture, just in time to see the negro twisting his bow-string around the neck of the stout and ill-favored ruffian, whom he would in another moment have strangled, had not Solonois cried:

'Hold, Lobo! spare him for the present, we may need him yet!'

'Lobo is your slave, but he'd like to squeeze windpipe here a little bit tight!' responded the negro, still holding his victim to the earth.

'No, spare him to show us the way to his den!' returned the pirate, 'but before you let him up, let me clasp a stopper over his jaw-tackling; he won't be the first man I've gagged, and do you take a double hitch around

his arms, and lash them behind his back, while I am at work about his cut-water.'

While the pirate hastily proceeded to gag his prisoner, the negro firmly bound him, and then he was permitted to rise to his feet. His small grey eyes turned almost green with anger, and his pale face as it was lighted up to view by the gleam of the lantern that he had carried, exhibited a strange expression of mingled fear and surprise. He gazed first at one, and then at the other of his captors, and then looked toward the entrance, as if he expected the arrival of more.

Solonois now had time to look around him and observe the appearance of the place which he had entered. It was an artificial cave cut in the rock, and they stood at the bottom of a flight of stairs which led off in the pitchy darkness above, he knew not where.

Drawing a dagger from his belt the pirate motioned the prisoner to ascend the stairs, saying in a low voice, which however, was fearfully firm and stern,

'Lead on to your den, sir, and beware how you trifle with your own life! If you conduct me to the lady's room—ah, you need not start, for I know *all*; lead me where I wish to go and your life is safe, but refuse, falter or hesitate, and you shall die like a dog!'

Lobo took up the lantern, which cast a flickering light along the damp and gloomy passage, and waited for the fellow to advance. The latter looked for a moment upon the pirate's face, but he read there nothing save a firm determination, and then another thought seemed to strike his own mind, and with a grin look of hateful assent, he stepped heavily up the stairway.

Through a long, dark, damp and winding way they passed; still on and upward through the rock, and at last reached a level but still underground space, along which were ranged several rooms or dungeons, barred and bolted heavily as if in olden times, or perhaps then they were in use.

As Solonois with dark and angry eye glanced along this dreary vault, he turned toward his prisoner and sternly asked:

'Is *she* here?'

The prisoner could only negatively answer by shaking his head, for his gag effectually served to prevent his utterance.

'Then lead on to where she is, and beware how you trifle with your own life!'

Again they passed on through this vault, and ascending a flight of rocky stairs at its farther end, found themselves in a few moments in a small room, where through a chink in the cracked wall they could see the bright moonlight outside, and thus they knew that they had gained the surface of the rock. The room, or rather the cell where they paused this time, seemed to have no outlet, and as the pirate glanced around him, the thought that he had been deceived or misled by the villain who guided him, crossed his mind; raising his dagger over the heart of his prisoner, he shouted:

'Once more, I bid thee on—on and beware! I have spared thee once, but trust me not again, nor trust to my forbearance.'

The wretch, as he saw that the golden hilted dagger which glittered above his heart was already stained with those dark and fearful spots which blood alone may write, trembled, and motioning with his head toward the side of the wall opposite to the place where the moon-light gleamed in through the fissure, endeavored to show that as he was bound he could do nothing.

'Untie him, Lobo, and then keep your eye and hand upon him, and see that he escapes you not!' said the pirate.

The negro obeyed, and when the hands of the man were free, he passed on to the wall and forcing out a concealed ring of iron, which would never be observed by a stranger, so closely did it fit within the wall, drew aside a pannel, which would permit them by stooping, to pass through. The guide was about to spring through, but the strong grasp of the negro held him back like a vice, and the pirate first stepped through and as he arose on the outside saw in a glance, that they were in the chapel of the old castle, for the cell through which they had ascended was

directly in the rear of the altar, before which now stood all three of them. The moon streamed palely in through broken window panes of stained glass, and from lofty columns and carved fret-work cast singular and fantastic shadows.

The place was still and silent as the tomb. The shrines of the saints were ranged in niches all along the walls as when a worshipping assembly knelt before them. A dark and gloomy representation on canvass of the Crucifixion, hung upon the lofty wall behind the altar, over which towered a cross of pure white marble, with a representation so exact of 'OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR' upon it, that they shuddered as they gazed, so life-like was each limb and tortured muscle; so painful the expression of agony, yet so kingly the face.

'Lead on, to—*her*—dungeon!' said Solonois, in a low tone, which rolled in deep hollow echoes along the deserted aisles.

The fellow raised his hands to his mouth, and glanced upon the pirate with a terrified and supplicating look as if he would speak.

'Unbind his mouth, Lobo, and keep now a stricter watch upon him. If he speaks louder than to reach my ear, or attempts to escape, finish the job from which I saved him. Let him die!'

The wretch shuddered as he saw the hideous look of ferocity with which the negro answered, as he shook the knotted bow-string before his eyes, and then turning to Solonois, in a low and abject tone, asked:

'Are you sent by Don Enrico?'

'No, lead on, I seek my lost Medora, and by the wrongs which she has suffered, if ye are not hasty in leading me to her, I'll learn you how to die a death, which hell itself can never match!'

The man's keen grey eyes gleamed with a singular look of intense and partly concealed cunning as he heard the pirate name Medora, and in the same low and abject tones he responded:

'If I show you the lady, will you set me free? If I so offend Don Enrico, it would be death for me to fall in his hands, and I must flee!'

'Ay, show her to me, and you shall have gold and freedom!' responded the pirate.

'I ask not gold, but permission to depart on the moment I have shown you to her room!'

'So that you may hasten to the governor and betray me?' hissed the pirate, as he laid his hand upon his dagger.

'No, but that I may leave this spot before day, and the island forever. I am already in Don Enrico's power, and if he knew of this, would soon feel his vengeance. He has protected me but to serve his purposes, and now would in a moment sacrifice me, if he knew that I had faltered in my duty unto him!'

'Speak you true? who are you, and how has he protected you?'

'He knows me—and my name once breathed before the people, would tear from me a thousand lives had I so many. I am *Vinas*!'

'What, the matricide, assassin and outlawed felon? He, who burned his aged mother in the flames to get her gold, who has committed a thousand coward murders in the dark, and twice escaped the hangman after condemnation? Art thou that fiend which hell would blush to own, and man turn pale to name. I love a brave villain; but a coward, a pitiful night-assassin; a cruel woman-slayer, a hound of blood—but no, I'll not curse thee now, lead me to her and thou shalt be free, ay, if one like thee can be free from thine own hell, thou mayst be free. I thought myself too hellish dark for aught save Satan's chiefest demon, but beside thee I am pure and innocent. Lead on!'

A thousand changes had crossed the face of the wretch, while in tones of scorn the pirate spoke, for the name of *Vinas* had been once as terrible but far more hateful than his own, and as he moved on through the still dark aisles of the church, he looked like a demon that longed to break the thralldom of a dreaded master, yet dared not.

They passed from the door of the chapel out into an open court-yard which once had been ornamented with a fountain, but it now was dry, and all around, vines clampering over the ruins; weeds and brambles growing

in the path-ways, and crumbled towers, betokened that desolation which is alone peculiar to long deserted dwelling places.

The castle stretched in an oblong, ungainly shape in their front along the edge of the cliff; at either end was a wing which extended back toward the hill in the rear, converging as it lengthened till both wings met, thus enclosing the court in a triangle.

The three passed on, entering the old castle through the large central door, into a lofty hall which had once been as magnificent as now in comparison it was gloomy. Scarce a glance did the impatient Solonois bestow upon its remains of rich ornament, but hurried on after his guide who now rapidly traversed several smaller apartments leading toward the northern wing, at last he paused in one, which like that behind the altar of the chapel, seemed to have no outlet. It was a small apartment, which by its furniture showed that it had once been used as a study, or private cabinet, for a large library case stood in one corner, and a writing-table and escrutoire still occupied the centre of the room, but neither seemed to have been in use for many years.

The wretch who guided them now laid his hand upon the side of the library case, which as he pulled it, turned like a door upon its hinges, and revealed a stair-case in its rear. Up this the party hastily ascended, and in a moment more arrived at the top, whence could be seen a long and narrow passage leading toward the side of the castle which fronted the sea, and at the end of this was a barred and grated door.

'She is there—here is the key, and now let me depart!' said the guide, as he pointed toward the door.

'Is there but one key?' sternly asked the pirate.

'No more—she is there!' answered the man, as he trembled and quailed beneath the searching look of his interrogator.

'Villain, beware how you trifle with me, lead on, when all is clear then will I set you free, and not before!'

The man now turned deadly pale, his every

look betokened that he had been foiled in some intended act of treachery, and his limbs shook beneath him as he led the way toward the grated door.

'Pass in first. Lobo, guard him close, and hand me the lantern!' said Solonois, as the guide sullenly unbarred and unlocked the heavy door. They passed within, and for a moment saw nothing in the damp and noisome gloom of the dungeon they had entered, but as they glanced around, they saw that another narrow door led from this, still further on. With a cautious and quiet step the pirate passed on over the rocky floor, and when on reaching the portal of the narrow door, looked into the room beyond. Scarcely did he breathe as he saw by the light of the moon which streamed in from a grated window in front of him, a female, asleep upon a low pallet of straw. She was beautiful; she could not be more than thirty or thirty-five years of age, but she was *not his Medora*! He gazed silently for a moment upon her thin pale form, and watched the heavings of her bosom, as she seemed to slumber calmly, but he could see no trace of his lost Medora in her. He turned to confront his traitorous guide, but at this instant a quick heavy blow, a curse from Lobo, and a hasty rush as if the prisoner had escaped, made him spring with a bound like a tiger toward the spot where he had left them, but he arrived only in time to see the death gasp of the traitor, who had drawn the dagger of Lobo from his belt, and had tried to stab him with it, but with the quickness of thought the negro had parried the blow with his bare arm, and wresting the dagger from the assassin's hand, had plunged it to the very hilt in his heart.

'Try to kill Lobo more, eh?' hissed the negro with a hideous grin, as he drove the dagger again and again through the lifeless body of his victim, as if each blow would make death more sure.

The pirate now turned again toward the cell, whence he heard a low moan as if the sleeper had awakened. Cautiously advancing, he saw that she had arisen, probably

awakened by the noise, and now stood near the little grated window which admitted the light of the bright young moon. As all now was still again, he having motioned the negro to be silent, he had an excellent opportunity to observe her.

She was not tall, but rather over the medium height, and though her form seemed thinned by suffering, still it was a figure at once graceful, commanding and well proportioned, and as she moved across the narrow floor, for she had no chains upon her limbs, she looked as I have fancied did the Queen of Scots, the noble Mary, in her sorrowful demeanor.

The eyes of the fair captive were jetty black and glowingly bright; they were fringed by lashes long, silk and dark, as if they had been torn from the finest web of night, and these with her long and tangled hair, as dark, contrasted with the marble paleness of her finely featured face.

And yet it was not *Medora*!

Solonois advanced slowly and as she heard his footsteps, she turned, and seeing a face she did not know, exclaimed with a shudder:

'It is not him! Oh God, have you come to——' and then as she saw the hideous face of the negro peering over the shoulder of Solonois, who as yet had not spoken, she screamed—'Oh spare me, do not murder me—my crime was not a crime, *he* loved me and married me, and who should dare to tear me from his breast, and my child—oh where is she?' Then as she fell on her knees her words became more and more incoherent, and then the pirate knew that which he before had feared; she was a maniac.

Carefully he raised her up, and bore her to the pallet, and spoke in kind tones to her, and as he did so her gaze seemed to become less vacant, but still her words were incoherent.

'Have you brought it, my sweet little girl? Is there flowers on her bier? And will you let me see him once more before I die! And then again she saw the face of the negro, who seemed to gaze upon her with a strange interest, and with a wild scream of terror she fainted.

A vase of water stood beside a loaf of coarse bread which was yet unbroken, and the pirate hastily took some of it and bathed her fair brow, at the same time bidding Lobo retire into the inner room, which the latter did, saying as he went:

'Lobo see that lady before!'

In a few moments she recovered, and finding herself treated kindly, and hearing none but gentle words, for the pirate's voice could be tuned as well to the music of tenderness as to the harshness of the battle shout, she became again calm, and each moment seemed to give more strength to her gaze, more life to her mind.

'Lady, who are you?' he asked, and then as a look of intelligence seemed to gather in her face—he added: 'For the love of heaven, tell me who you are, and how came you here?'

'He called me Letilla, and so did my sister use to call me too. But I have had a horrid—horrid dream. A fiend used to come and curse me and you—no, you are kind, you are not he!'

'No, lady, I am a friend. Know you of any other unfortunates imprisoned here, or where their cells are?'

'No—I have been here a long time. I used to count the suns and know the days when a new one came, but they came until they were so many I grew sick and forgot to count!'

'Poor creature!' sighed Solonois, as he saw that it was useless to endeavor to gain information from her unsettled mind. He therefore arose to leave her, but now she seemed to exhibit more reason than before, for as he turned toward the door, she rushed to his side, and clasping his knees, implored him to take her away with him.

'Oh, leave me not here to perish?' she cried: 'Nightly I see dreadful sights and many, oh heaven, how many, many days have been since I was here! I am not mad, you think me crazed but no—I am not—he sent me here—oh take me back to him!'

'To whom, lady?' asked Solonois, but

ere she could speak her answer, a low sweet voice was heard, and breathlessly the pirate listened to its melody, as it rose and fell in gentle cadence on the still night-winds. The words he heard were like the melody simple and touching.

I.

'I'm very sad to-night, love,
I'm pining here alone;
Mine eye has lost its light, love,
And hope at last hath gone;
For me there's nothing bright, love,
I am, I am alone!

II.

Oh yes, I'm sad to-night, love,
I wish that I could weep,
Tears might leave my heart more light, love,
As dews the flowers sweep;
For me there's nothing bright, love
I cannot go to sleep.'

Breathlessly had he listened to each word, and at last when the voice died away into the stillness of the evening, like perfume diffusing abroad upon the breath of night, he turned to the lady by his side:

'Oh who is she—and where?'

'It is the spirit that sings sad songs to me every night, but she never comes to see me!' responded the other.

'By heaven, 'tis my Medora!' he shouted, none other could breathe such matchless strains. 'Lady, remain here till I return, it will be soon, and fear not, for I am your protector?'

Gathering again his cloak around his noble form, the pirate hastened to the outer apartment, where he saw Lobo kneeling by the side of the dead man, holding in one hand the lantern, and with the other endeavoring to detach a bundle of keys from the belt which was around his body.

'Come with me, Lobo, and bring the light!' said the pirate as he hastily strode on.

'Lobo come, he got keys now—he find little Quasey!' responded the negro, and followed.

On down the narrow stairs up which they before had ascended after leaving the old

study went they now, but when they got there, the pirate paused to consider in which direction he should search for her whose voice he had heard. Seeing in the opposite corner of the study an old book-case precisely like that which had concealed the secret door and passage which they had now returned from, his eye brightened with joy, for he hoped it might serve as the other. With mad strength the pirate seized its carved corner-post, but it opened easily, disclosing within a passage precisely like the other. With hurried steps the pirate and his follower strode along the damp and gloomy passage, and found at its end a barred and locked door.

After examining the bunch of keys which Lobo had torn from the belt of the slain, one was selected, applied to the rusted lock, which with a grating jar opened. Here for a moment, all was darkness and gloom beyond the bluish circle of their light, and in the darkness they heard a sound so strange and unearthly, that even the blood of the dauntless Solonois ran colder in his veins.

It was a strange sound between the chatter of an ape, and the angry moanings of a devil in misery. Holding the light so as to throw its gleam beyond, the pirate advanced into the gloom, and at last saw something coiled up making strange grimaces, and crouching before another door in the rear of the dungeon, as if to guard the entrance, so like a devil, so hideous that he shuddered, but at the same instant, Lobo uttered a wild scream of joy and rushed forward.

'It is my Quasey, my poor little Quasey!' and as the negro spoke, he clasped the strange little dwarf to his breast, the latter uttering shrill cries of terror, and struggling to get free.

'Quasey—Quasey! Not know Lobo?' cried the negro, as he tried in vain to soothe the terrors of the hideous dwarf, in whom he recognised his long lost child.

While this scene was going on, Solonois had hurried to the door, his steps hastened as the sound of a rattling chain fell upon his ear, and as through a barred lattice in the door

he gazed in, saw, by the light of the moon, which here shone in through a window precisely like that in which he had found the other lady, a sight which thrilled through his frame, froze the very currents of his life-blood at their source, and chilled his soul into silence. He could not speak and scarce could breathe! A female form, a thin and delicate female form lay upon a coarse and filthy pallet, and around her slender waist a massive iron chain was passed, and from thence it led to an iron ring in the wall. She was on her knees in silent prayer. She spoke not, and yet her lips moved, and then he knew that she was not crazed, for yet had she strength to pray. One glance at those noble features, one glance at those lashes long and silky which drooped down her snow-pale cheek, and he knew that it was his own, his long lost—his ever loved *Medora*!

With a trembling hand he noiselessly unbolted the door, and with a step so soft that it disturbed her not, he passed in to the room, or cell where she knelt. He gazed upon her as she looked so angelic, even in her garb of squalid misery; even in her marks of haggard suffering, but dared not speak. And now her voice breathed out aloud the prayer of her heart and he heard the words.

'My husband!' Then knew he for whom and how she prayed, then knew he that her truth and constancy was pure and bright and everlasting as the heaven she seemed to belong unto, and though it seemed like sacrilege so to do, he broke the silence with one single word:

'*Medora*!'

She started to her feet, and while the echoes of that rattling chain went like ice to his heart, she gazed upon the cloaked and disguised form, but in it she recognised not him who had but now been the subject of her prayers, but that name awoke strange echoes in her heart.

'Who calls *Medora*—a name so long unspoken that herself had almost forgot its sound?'

'*Medora*!' and as now he spoke, the cloak dropped from his tall form.

The voice so tender, low and sweet; the look of love unchanged, the dress the same, all—all were in an instant recognised, and with a spring which was rudely checked by her cruel chain, she sprang toward him, with a glad cry:

'Oh my Francisco, my husband!'

And as he sprang to meet her, she fainted in his arms. The chain was fastened around her with a lock, and one of the keys which we have before spoken of fitting it, he hastily unlocked it and in a moment more flung the heavy shackles from her side. She recovered in time to hear the ringing metal as he dashed it against the dungeon wall, and who can describe the mingled look of love and joy which beamed from her eyes, as she looked up in the face of him from whom she had so long been torn.

'Oh thank the Holy God of Heaven! my prayers are answered!' said she, as she pressed again and again her pale lips to his, 'or is this a dream? I have before dreamed of meeting you and our child, our poor boy, who was murdered, even by his grandsire!'

'No, my *Medora*! There is more joy yet in store to pay thee for all this suffering. Your son, our sweet boy lives, and soon you shall see him!'

'Lives, my husband? said you that he lived? Oh no, for I saw alas in that fearful hour, I saw him cast from the fearful height, like a gull diving through the clouds of night, his white garments fluttering in the air, as my cruel father tore him from my arms, and cast him over the cliff!'

'And yet dearest, he was spared as by a miracle, and yet lives to bless us both. But I have not now time to explain. We must leave this place ere the dawn, and gain a more comfortable resting place, and I have another poor sufferer to care for, who like you has been chained here to die a living death!'

CHAPTER XXVI.

'Piteous of her tears I pressed
The little darling to my breast ;
And watched her quiet slumbers there,
With all a mother's tender care !
From day to day the orphan grew,
And with her my affection too ;
Till at the last, around my mind
The winning girl so closely twined,
I learned her baby form to prize,
Like one of those within mine eyes,
And loved the young adopted more
Than ever mother did before.'

DID your lady know you when her gaze first fell upon you ?' asked Se-lonolois, as he stood alone with Elizabetta about noon on the day after his discovery of the lost and loved Medora.

'Oh yes, sir, for I have not changed so much as she. Alas, how could her father be so cruel ! Oh, deeply cruel and dark must be his heart to know that she, so tender, frail, and fair, was pining in a dungeon's damp and noisome air. Oh if he had but seen her there, his heart could not be human and wish to add yet another blow to all his cruelties. I wonder if he has a conscience !'

'I will know ere the night be past. He will receive a visit from me ere long, and I will shake his guilty soul if it can be done by mortal !'

'You visit him, Don Francisco ? Discovery would be your certain death.'

'I will take care of that, good Elizabetta. Fear not now that I will run risk of danger, for I have found her who can make my life worth keeping. Before, I have sought rather

than avoided death ; but now I shall guard me well.'

'Oh, do be cautious for my lady's sake, for hard indeed would be her fate to get this glimpse of happiness and then return into darkness even yet more dense than that from which she has but now emerged.'

'Fear not—but have you yet learned who she is that I rescued at the same time from the dungeon ?'

'No, Don Francisco, her answers are all so wild and incoherent that I cannot gather anything from them ; but she strangely resembles Lady Luella in form and feature !'

'It is true, and Lobo tells me that he has seen her amid the gay and beautiful in the city, and yet he cannot remember when or where.'

'There is a strange mystery in her ; she seems of gentle birth, and she has been peerlessly beautiful, even as now is the sweet Luella whom she so much resembles.'

'Who is Luella, Elizabetta ? Once you told me she was not Don Enrico's daughter !'

'It is more than I myself do know, but I will give you all I know of her history. On the night when the Lady Leonor, Don Enrico's last wife, died in the throes of maternal suffering, I was hastening from her room to procure a cordial from another apartment, when a masked cavalier stopped me in the darkened passage, and almost breathless from agitation asked me if the rumor which he had that instant heard, that the Lady Leonor and her infant could neither survive through the night was true; and when I told that the child was already dead, and that the mother was then dying, he cried in low, choking tones:

'Thank God, then, that *one* may be spared! She is innocent, but the guilty shall die—ay, the adulteress shall be punished!' while frightened at his manner, and wondering what might mean his strange and awful words, he added, and well do I remember his tones as he placed a heavy bag of gold in my hand and then revealed a sleeping infant which he had hidden beneath his cloak:

'Woman, take this child, and in its place bring me the dead—nay, start not nor dare to refuse, for so sure as there is a God you shall die on this spot if you dare to disobey!'

I trembled, and would have turned to flee, but a gleaming dagger was in his hand, and—I sunk on my knees and promised. As I took the babe in my arms, he bade me conceal from all persons living that this was other than the infant of the Lady Leonor, and to let her grow up as the Governor's daughter, but made me promise never to leave her side. He said that while I obeyed and fulfilled his will, I should yearly receive a noble present; when I failed, that vengeance should overtake me even were I in a convent's cell, or kneeling before God's holy altar!

'I took the child, and hurrying back to the room of the Lady Leonor, exchanged it for that which was already dead, and as I was the lady's sole nurse and attendant I easily succeeded. He bore away the dead infant,

and I have never seen him since. The lady Leonor died that night, and as the child which the stranger had brought had been apparently but a few hours on earth, I easily passed it to the governor and all others as his own, though much the physician wondered that a child which he had reported as dying should so soon recover, and in truth I know not what his talk and surmises would have led to had he not been found dead on the Plaza one morning, and then all talk of the child ceased.

'I have reared her, loved her as if she were a child of my own, and now I could not bear to part from her; and I have watched the love of her and Juan, and joyed over it at a gardener joys to watch the unfolding blossoms of the rarest flowers in his soil. Each year I receive a purse of gold, and by this I know and feel that I am watched, and death might now be mine if this disclosure should become known to him!'

'Mystery upon mystery!' said Solonois, as he mused upon this singular statement, 'Have you never had any other clue to lead to a knowledge of her parentage?'

'None save that which I have already disclosed to you. Her supposed father never has for a moment doubted that she was his daughter; she never for a moment has conceived that Don Enrico Larranaga was other than her father. He has ever bidden me be cautious not to expose her to the gaze of the young cavaliers; and at times has cautioned upon her conduct with Juan; but he little dreams that they are lovers!'

'He little dreams of much that soon he must know Elizabetta, I now shall go and take a temporal leave of my Medora, for I go to the city this evening. After I have left, I wish you with cautious care to explain all that has occurred, and his patronage to Juan. Have a care that you do it gently, nor too suddenly, and then lead him to his mother's side, and let him cheer her until my return. Keep this secret from Luella, and all save Juan and his mother; it is a delicate and difficult duty, but you alone can perform it.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

'When Michael lay on his dying bed,
His conscience was awakened;
He bethought him of his sinful deed,
And he gave me a sign to come with speed:
I was in Spain when the morning rose,
But I stood by his bed ere the evening close.
The words again may not be said,
That he said to me, on death-bed laid;
They would rend this Abbaye's massy nave,
And pile it in heaps above his grave.'

THE cry of the governor as he fainted, had been heard by the guard as it echoed through the palace, and in a moment the room was filled with soldiers, all wondering as they saw the form of Don Enrico lying senseless upon the floor, what new danger of mystery had assailed their lord. A physician was called, and soon Don Enrico was restored to consciousness. He gazed around, and though he saw that friends alone were there, he shuddered and passed his hand over his eyes, as if to shut out some horrid vision.

'Where is he? Has he again escaped?' he asked, in feeble tones.

'Who, your excellency? Have any been here to disturb?'

'Yes, Solonois, the fiend of blood, was here, standing above me with a blood-stained dagger in his hand, and—go search the room—the palace—the grounds! He must be here, else he is surely leagued with the fiends of hell to bear him whither he pleases, and to render him invisible!'

'The spirits of hell have no power against those who do no wrong and serve their God!' said a calm and solemn voice close beside the couch where they had laid the governor.

The speaker was a tall and white-haired monk who had just entered the room, hooded and wrapped in the robes of his order, and his voice was deep and hollow, though it somewhat trembled, as if he felt the weight of many years.

'Holy father, I am pleased with your presence, for indeed I do believe the fiends of hell are in league with mine enemy. Twice has he been here in this very room, ~~twice~~ have my alarmed guards sought for him and returned, as now they do, with disappointment written on their faces!'

'Have you sinned against this man, that thus he is permitted to torment you?' asked the priest, in the same deep, stern tone.

'I returned him wrong for wrong once, but for one wrong, and that not half so deep and dark as he did deem it, he hath repaid a

thousand. He hath slain hundreds of my people, pillaged the land, burned villages, and when I have crushed his power, conquered his band, destroyed his stronghold, and burned his vessels, when I thought him slain, he comes to torment me and render my few remaining days more miserable!"

"What were the wrongs which you did to him, and which seem to have led to all these?"

"Father, I am not in thy confessional! It doth not suit me now to recall the past! When I would be shrived—then it is time for duties so unpleasant," answered Don Enrico, apparently impatient and vexed with all these questionings.

"Delays are ever dangerous, and when fruit is ripe and ready for the gathering, who may say how soon 'twill drop from the tree? A breath will bear the autumnal leaf from the twig to which it clings; and as is that leaf which quivers in the gale, even so is life in earth's dark vale; the blast of death sweeps wildly on, and hope and life are gone, forever gone!"

The governor turned even more pale than before while he heard the monk, in a deep and hollow voice, speak words so wild and warning, and he meekly answered:

"Your pardon, holy father, I am not well now, but I would gladly hold converse with thee at another time!"

"You shall!" was the brief answer of the monk, as with a haughty and most unpriestly step he turned from the apartment.

"What priest was that, I remember not to have seen him before?" asked Don Enrico, after the stranger had passed away.

None could answer him. The priest was a stranger, yet it need not be wondered at, thought the governor, that out of three thousand in his city, he knew not all, when many were men who seldom started from out the shadows of their gloomy walls.

Scarcely had the priest, or (why need we conceal him from you, reader?) Solonois the disguised, passed from the portals of the governor's palace, when he paused in the shade

of the old cathedral, which stands but a short distance further down the Calle, and was about to alter his dress, when the sound of two voices in low discourse near him, caused him to remain motionless and in silence. They were but a few steps from him, standing as he was, close in the shade of the wall and behind a massive pillar, and he was endeavoring to catch the import of their conversation from some strange words he had already heard, when he saw a cavalier coming down the street toward them. The cavalier was in the moonlight outside of the shadows of the church, and saw not Solonois or the two men who stood in the shade, but these could plainly see him.

The cavalier was a tall, majestic looking man apparently about forty years of age, with a pale face, but flashing eye and haughty expression; his dress indicated that he was a man of rank, and though in that murderous city few dared to stir abroad after darkness had settled on the earth, he with a free and careless step strode on, as if he neither feared nor cared for danger. But 'twere better for him had he been more cautious. Just as he reached a position directly opposite the spot where the two men were concealed in the shade, Solonois saw them spring, with naked daggers gleaming in their hands, upon the cavalier, and ere he could move from where he stood, several rapid blows were heard, and as he shouted, "Hold! forbear!" and sprang from the shade in the moonlight, he saw the cavalier sink with a heavy groan to the earth.

The assassins turned as they heard his deep and hollow voice, and seeing his tall figure in the priestly robes of black, seemed to think it a supernatural appearance, for they immediately turned and fled.

Solonois hastened to the side of the fallen man, whose blood gushed from several wounds at each throb of breath. The streets were deserted, no one near to aid him, but this was not the first time Solonois had seen blood, and now, strange as it may appear, he who had sworn "death to the Spaniards," and eternal enmity, knelt, and with a kind and

skilful hand, tried to staunch the wounds of the stranger.

'Oh, bear me home—it is useless to try to save my life, but I would not die in the street!' and then as he saw the dress of his assistant, said, 'Providence hath sent you here to shrive me, for I have dark and deadly sins to confess. Oh, God! a murdered wife—a child deserted—no, here is not a lot so sad—but holy father, bear me home—bear all and—and if you can, oh, shrive me from my sins!'

The first thought of Solonoi was to declare his inability to perform the sacred functions, but a second thought showed him the danger of an acknowledgement of his disguise, and while he finished staunching as well as he could, with the linen of the sufferer, his fearful wounds, he asked:

'Your name, sir, and where shall I bear you?'

'I am Don Miguel Castro, Marquis de Salto; my palace is but a few paces further on—O, bear me there, and let me not die in the street!'

Solonoi raised the wounded man in his strong arms and bore him as if he were a child, unto his palace.

Pale turned the porter as he saw the bleeding form of his master thus brought homeward, but when in a faint voice he heard him order him to show the stranger to his chamber, and saw that the latter was a priest, he appeared re-assured, and with hasty steps, but agitated looks, led the way to the bed-chamber of the Marquis, where the latter was instantly laid upon a couch.

'Shall I call a surgeon, my lord?' asked the servant as he saw that his master was much spent with loss of blood.

'No, Stefano, no, it were useless,' returned the wounded man. 'I feel as if even now my soul was parting from my grasp, and while yet I have it, I would snatch away its dark and fearful load of sin, else down—down oh God! how far 'twould sink were it now to spring from time into the boundless ocean of eternity! Hear me, Sir Priest, and for the love of God shrive me, if ye can!'

Solonoi looked at the servant.

'Stefano, leave me, and when you are wanted, the bell will ring!' said the Marquis.

The servant turned sadly from his wounded master and departed.

'Now hear me, hear all, and then—may God have mercy on me!' groaned the wounded man.

'Proceed, God hears and knows; I listen!' was the answer, in deep and solemn tones.

'Oh, how hard it is to remember the thousand faults which like clouds that throng the sky crowding on the memory at an hour like this! Holy father, one sin hangs darker and heavier than all the rest upon my dying breast. This will I unfold and more, if God will only spare, but I fear me it is too late for hope. The villains struck sure at home. But to my tale.

'Nineteen years ago I met and loved one of the fairest ladies of this land, where all are like their flowers, beautiful. I loved her that she was young and full of charms; I wooed and won her as my bride. I married her that I thought so pure and truthful, and for a time I enjoyed that happiness which few have known—which none can describe. My life was like a summer day; sunny, cloudless, balmy and fragrant with the flowers of joy. But alas, too soon came on the night, the dark and chilling night.

My wife—no, she did not, for O God! I since have learned that she died as pure as when I took her to my arms. I had been married nearly a year when I began to observe that among the many cavaliers who loved to come within my household circles of festivity, Don Paulo Slanderio, a cavalier well known for his wealth and personal attractions, was more than usually constant in his attendance. I knew that he was a libertine of the darkest order, and with an aching heart I saw that he gazed on her, ay, on her my loved, my own, with an eye of passion. But if his glances pained me, what were my feelings when I thought I saw her give glance for glance, and sigh for sigh, and burning look for burning look of love. Oh,

God! my brain was wild, my soul was dark, my very heart was on fire.

'Weeks passed on. I watched them closely, and though in her I could see but little that seemed like actual guilt, I knew and feared his hateful power. He, too, seemed to joy in my uneasiness, and to exert himself still more to win her love from my adoring heart. But still I bore all—I neither cursed nor slew him.

'At last she became ill and went to her confinement with the first pledge of our matrimonial love. Never, never shall I forget the night, the fearful night of that occurrence. I had been abroad and was returning homeward, and as the hour was late, returned through the garden-postern in the rear of my house. As I passed in, I saw while I was on the steps to the portico, the shadow of a man crouching beneath the lattice casement of her chamber, ay, of the bed-chamber of my wife. It was but the work of a second to draw my sword, but he fled ere I could reach the spot, and as he ran down the avenue I saw that it was Don Paulo. Oh, God! how burned my brain and heart and soul at that wild moment. I could not overtake him, but as he fled I saw the breeze bear a paper from out his hand, and stooping I picked it up and read in the small and delicate tracery of a lady's hand, these words:

"I soon will be thine forever!"

'Wild, ay, like a maniac then I walked along in the night air, I knew not, cared not whither, so that I went not home. I went to the palace and there all was confusion. The Lady Leonor who had just passed through her maternal throes was dying, as was her new-born infant. I thought me of those who were beneath my dome, and then again rushed into the streets. I went I know not where, but was suddenly stopped by a villain in a mask, who with his dagger at my breast demanded my purse.

"Take it," I cried, "and if ye would do a deed that fitteth such as ye, I'll give you ten as heavy! Ay, do me but a double deed, and I will give you twenty!"

"My lord marquis, say what ye would that I should do. The dagger of Vinas never fails!" said the man, as he tore his mask from his cold and soulless face, while his cat-eyes gleamed with ferocity and avarice.

'I looked, and when I knew that the assassin so dreaded stood before me, dark, wild thoughts, that came like the vague shapes of a mist-cloud into my mind, now settled fast into a dark and dreadful resolution. I determined that she should *die*—ay, she that I then loved—love now and will love forever! I stooped to commune with that low and outlawed villain, told him how to enter her chamber through the guilty lattice, and bade him drag her forth and bury her forever from my sight. I bade him not to slay her there, for I could not look upon her blood. And then a thought came across my mind, my new-born child was innocent, I could not slay it, and yet it would be motherless. Again a thought crossed my mind. I bade him tarry but an hour, and then to tear *her* from the chamber, and return to me disguised upon the morrow for the price of blood—*her* blood!

'I thought me of the governor's dying child, and a wild, strange fancy entered my brain. I rushed to my wife's chamber and she slept, slept calmly as she did when first she was mine own. My child, my infant daughter lay in its first earthly slumber. Carefully I raised it from its resting place, I bore it beneath my cloak, and fled to the governor's palace. I found the nurse; with gold and threats of death I persuaded her to do my will, and my babe lay in the place of the other which was already dead.

'With it in my arms I sped back to my garden house; taking thence a spade, I hurried to a retired corner, and beneath some thick growing bushes, dug a shallow grave and in it laid the fair young babe. Scarce had I done this ere I heard a piercing scream from the direction of her window. Twice it rose upon the stilly night, thrice I rose to rush and rescue her from the ruffian's murderous hands, but all then was still, and I sunk to the earth, a sick-hearted, miserable, earth-cursed and heaven-deemed man!

'I returned to my palace, and found there all in confusion. My servants rushed to my side and pale, with trembling lips and staring, tearful eyes, told me that my wife and child were gone. And well did I act then my part. O, how I raved, and stamped, and swore, and tore my hair—ay, though I knew that I had sold—no, bought her into death, for had not I given gold for her blood? But my child was saved—is still alive and safe, O, would to God my innocent wife was!'

'Innocent?' exclaimed the priest, who with breathless interest had listened to the narrative, 'innocent, methought you deemed her guilty?'

'Ay, once I did—but that was long years ago, yet if I have strength I will tell you all. When she was gone I swore that he, the villain Paulo should not live. He, too, had fled, yet who can avoid an injured husband's oath of deep revenge? For years I traced him from one land to another, and it is now four years since I met him, for he had ever avoided me. At last we met. 'Twas on a mountain road in Italy, and he knew me not till we were side and side. But when I called his name, and bade him stand and guard his life, the coward paled and turned to flee. A ball from my carbine pierced his form and he fell to the earth a dying man. He lived but a few moments, yet it was long enough to confess, to damn me forever with a proof of *her innocence*! He had stolen into my garden to purposely irritate my jealousy, which with his dying lips he swore was ungrounded; he had himself written the paper which I had found, and purposely cast it from him as he fled.

'He died and I returned with a vengeance satisfied, a guilty and a burning heart. I recalled every act of hers which I had seen, and not one shade of guilt could I see when I gazed upon her in the truth-telling mirror of calm reflection. I felt and knew that she was innocent, I felt and knew that I was her murderer!'

'And now, O, holy father, for I am near spent, now if there is mercy, if, as I would

fain believe, you can shrive and absolve me from my sins, I pray ye do it, for I would meet her in heaven, there to plead her forgiveness, for there she is a saint, even as she was on earth, pure, spotless and undefiled! O, daily and nightly have I knelt and gazed upon her angelic face, and prayed that that dark crime might pass away from my soul. O, look upon that perfect portraiture of her before you shrive me, and see what a fearful penance I deserve!' As the marquis said this, he called the attention of Solonois to a portrait which the latter had not before observed, which hung beside the couch.

As Solonois gazed upon it, a singular change came over his countenance. First a look as if he doubted the truth of his vision; then a look of strange surprise, then an expression of happy satisfaction, then, preserving the calm and dignified manner he had assumed he responded to the Marquis:

'My son I can absolve you from the sin of *her* death, but for thy other crimes go ask the mercy of thy God—I have no power to forgive them!'

'Oh holy father, why absolve me of the worst, and not from those more light give me freedom?'

'Because the first is but a sin of intention not yet committed,—the others, alas, are already written in the dread record above!'

'*Not yet committed*? oh, holy father, for the love of the God whom you serve, explain those words!'

'*She* whom you mourn is not dead!'

'Oh holy man of God, I pray you not to mock me! I am a dying man, deceive me not now in my last agony!'

'I deceive you not. Your Letilla lives!'

'Her name? I told you not her name, oh who are you, and what know ye of her? am I not her murderer?'

'No! She lives, and shall be restored to you. The villain Vinas did not slay her, but spared her either to extort more gold from you, or for some purpose only known to his black heart, and but lately I rescued her from his hands. Even now his unburied corpse lies

in the dungeon where for years he has confined her !'

'Oh God, is all this true—and now must I die?' murmured the marquis, and from excitement and loss of blood he fainted.

Solonois now rung the bell, and bade the servant who answered it call a surgeon, for he yet hoped to recover the marquis. The latter returned to consciousness in a few moments, and in feeble tones said :

'Oh tell me all, holy father, and let me see her before I die!'

'You shall see her soon, but now I pray you be calm. I have sent for a surgeon; I do not think your wounds are very deep, for see no blood has flown since I staunch'd them. Be calm, you will recover, and then I pledge myself before God that you shall see her. Be careful not to say anything before the surgeon or attendants. I will leave you when they arrive, but you shall see me daily

until you recover. Nay smile not so; I have seen wounds before, and you will recover!'

'I pray God I may live to see that injured angel of innocence!' responded the marquis.

'You shall, or if your danger increases, she shall be brought to your side. Do not doubt that I speak truly. How would I have known her name, were she not known to me, when in all her history you named her not. Nay more, I knew the history of your child before we met to night, how you met Elizabetta the nurse, and with a dagger in one hand and a purse of gold in the other, made her consent to the change. You were masked on that night!'

'I was—oh holy father, yours seems the power to read all things, the past and the present. I trust myself and all my hopes to thee!'

'Hush! The surgeon comes—farewell—be silent, and happiness doth yet await thee!'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,

This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,

From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentrated all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprang,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.'

OH my Francisco! Two whole days absent from me, and these two have been as years, even though years, weary, wretched ones have passed since we have met!'

This was the exclamation of Medora, as she pressed her husband to her heart on his return from the city after the incidents of our last chapter.

'Dear Medora, yet a little while and all will be so settled and arranged, I hope, that we will never know one moment's separation again. Yes, for if there be not peace for us here, there are other lands as beautiful; other climes as genial; other men more kind and charitable. The world is broad, and there is not a being placed upon it, but can find some spot that is suited to his means and taste and character. There is the wilderness for the savage; the desert for the Arab; the ocean for the mariner; the valley for the husbandman; the mountain for the poet's throne and the city for the miser and the villain; all

may find a biding place to suit their natures, be they pure and honest, or dark and vile !”

‘But yet I would not leave my native land if it were possible for me to remain in it. Though I have seen dark days and sorrowful hours, though I have felt the weight of oppression and wrong in it, still I love, oh how I love my native land !’

‘I blame you not, my own one, and if my present intentions are successful, you never shall leave it. I believe that I soon shall acquire a powerful ally with your father, and with his aid and the remains of human feeling which yet linger in Don Enrico’s breast, I may hope to bury the past and make for us a peaceful future !’

‘A friend and ally, my Francisco ? What mean you ?’

‘Know you Don Miguel Castro ?’

‘Whom—the Marquis de Saltero ?’

‘The same—he is my friend !’

‘Thy friend, my husband ? Oh beware, he is the bosom companion and confidant of my father !’

‘Then so much the better that he is *my* friend !’

‘Fear you not treason from him ? You are outlawed you have told me, and that a price has been set upon your head !’

‘He surely would not betray me. But yester-night I saved his life, and on the day I found and rescued you, I released for him a suffering wife, whom he had supposed dead and lost to him forever, as you were to me in my sad belief !’

‘Saved his life, and found for him a wife ? Explain, my husband !’

‘It were too long a tale dearest, to say all, but let this suffice for the present. Yester-night he was beset and sorely wounded by assassins who fled at my approach. I bore him to his home. I was disguised in the habit of a priest, in which concealment I had unknown visited and conversed with your father. The wounded lord, who thought himself dying, began to make confession to me, and so strangely opened he his tale, that I let him say on until I learned ——’

‘What, oh my Francisco, why do you pause ?’

‘That in a mad fit of jealousy he had given his wife over to the hands of an assassin, that he thought her dead, but I knew and told him that she lived ! She was the lady, whom I rescued at the same time with yourself !’

‘Oh, how strange and mysterious !’

‘Yes, but mystery seems now the order of the day. Have you seen our noble boy ?’

‘Yes, he went from my side in sadness, but a moment ere you entered.’

‘Why in sadness ?’

‘The joy he feels in knowing that he hath living parents, is covered with the clouds of misery, in the thought that she, to whom he has given his entire love, the strong and pure affections of his youthful heart, is lost to him forever by the discovery of a relationship which forbids marriage ; that he, whom he loves is my half sister !’

‘Have you seen her yet ?’

‘No, I dared not let Elizabetta break the news to her yet. She is young and delicate. A shock like this would kill her !’

‘She will have the shock of joy to hear, not grief !’

‘I do not understand you, my Francisco !’

‘You shall anon, my own Medora—but how seemed our boy ? Was he all that thy fond heart had painted him ?’

‘Oh yes ! Noble, handsome, and I know not why, yet he seemed so much like that which thou wast, when first my young heart gave its love to thee !’

‘What said he when he learned his parentage—that he was the son of Solonois !’

‘He thanked his God that his hand had not slain thee, and said, that if thou wert but as true to me and kind to him, as thou wert brave and terrible in battle, he would love thee as son ne’er loved sire before !’

‘Brave, noble boy. Oh he too, is an eagle in the storm of war ; though when we met I deemed him an enemy, my admiration of that boy’s bravery made me spare him, when had he ten lives, each could I have taken !’

‘God in his holy kindness ruled thy hand ;

but of this lady, you have not seen or heard from her since your return.'

'No, and I fain would know how she fares, and if yet kindness and comfort hath restored to her darkened mind its light of reason. I will call Elizabetta, and make inquiry!'

He rung a bell and in a few moments the nurse appeared.

'Elizabetta:' said he as she entered, 'how fares the maniac lady?'

'Better, oh far better, Don Francisco! She is now quite rational, and I have found out ——'

'No more than I know, good Elizabetta, nor half so much. Let her be ready to visit us here in this room soon. I intend to have a pleasant little re-union here soon; and to commence, let Juan be summoned hither! After that have Luella ready to enter, and you may witness each scene of this new drama, which will be interesting, as it is strange and mysterious.'

'I wait for Juan first!'

Elizabetta, with a look of surprise, departed to obey the mission.

In a few moments a knock at the door announced a visiter, and the next moment Juan, with a flushed face and beaming eye which spoke his excitement, entered the room. He paused but an instant at the threshold, and for that instant his eye rested on the madly form and noble face of Solonois, who dressed in a rich garb which fitted well his perfect figure, looked like one born king over men; the son saw in the brightening eye and quivering lip and in the outstretched arms the father before him, and with one bound he rushed into his open arms.

'Thou art indeed my father, and we have met before!' said he, as he rested in that long and warm embrace.

'And thou my son, noble, brave and skilful, as this scar can testify!' said the father, as he raised his hand to the scar upon his cheek.

'Are you not now happy, my son?' said the fond mother, as she pressed her lips to his high fair brow.

'Oh my mother, tongue could not describe

my bliss—if—if—' here the youth faltered and turned pale, but his father gathered up the sentence and concluded it by saying:

'If Luella were thine, or could be! Nay, turn not pale my boy, nor let dark despair come groping with its icy feet along the pleasant paths of thy young heart. She shall be thine, ay thy wedded, cherished bride!'

'Is she not my mother's sister?' sadly rejoined the youth.

'No, no more than she is thine own! no drop of her blood flows in thy veins!'

'Oh my father, do not mock me!'

'I tell thee true, boy, do I not Elizabetta?' returned the father, referring to the duenna, who had stood a silent and anxious listener all this time.

'She is not a relation of thine or his!' said the nurse.

'It is time that she too had a share in this mystery, Elizabetta, call her now!' said Solonois, who seemed to take a wild pleasure in thus gradually revealing to each party their parts in the mysterious drama which was afoot.

In a short time the duenna returned, and with her came the fair Luella, from whom as yet, all had been hidden regarding the new-found, and their relationship to her beloved. Therefore when she entered, though she spoke not, as she gazed from one to the other her look of inquiry was intense, and it only grew stronger when she saw Juan bend down and kiss the pale brow of the strange lady, so calm and queenly in her mien.

'I knew not that you had guests, Elizabetta, I thought that you said the surgeon wanted me! Is yon armed cavalier the surgeon? He looks somewhat like in feature, but most unlike his present garb if he be the same!'

'And yet he is!' answered the person alluded too, 'and we all are somewhat disguised here. Even you, fair lady, are not what you seem!'

'I, sir! What mean you?'

'You shall know anon. Do you love this young and brave cavalier?'

Deep was the blush and angry her glance, as she replied :

' I know not why a stranger dares a query so bold and rude !'

' Because if ye truly love him, I will have ye wed him !'

' You sir? Methinks my father, his uncle, should be the best and only one who hath power to consent to, or take order in this matter !'

' He hath no uncle, thou knowest not who thy father is !'

' Sir, it becomes you not to mock me here in my father's palace !'

' Lady I mock you not, nor in aught deceive you. You are not in your father's palace. Don Enrico Larranaga is no relation to you !'

' Oh Juan, what means this mystery? Who is this strange-spoken cavalier, and who that pale and noble queen over whom you bend with tenderness; oh for the love you bear me, relieve me from this cruel suspense!' sobbed she now bewildered and terrified girl.

' This is the spirit of the rock, my own Luella, and yet she is my own, my blessed mother; yon is one whose name would make you tremble, therefore I will not now name him; let it suffice that he is my father!'

' She the spirit whose sweet song I loved so much, she—oh, that I had such a mother!' and the young girl rushed forward and kneeling before the lady, kissed her on the fair hands.

' Now the other, Elizabetta! It is time for you to wonder, and for all to know each other !'

The duenna retired, and with her next appearance came the lady Letilla, and the light which beamed from her large dark eye spoke the return of reason, as the glorious sun speaks the death of night and the birth day.

' Are you the brave cavalier unto whom I owe my deliverance from a captivity even worse than death?' asked the lady of Solos as she advanced with graceful dignity. It hath been my favored lot to aid the

Donna Letilla Castro, Marquesa de Saltero, but I pray her now be seated, I have a tale to tell, in which all are interested who are around me !'

' My name?' gasped the lady. ' You speak like one who knew me !'

' Ay, lady, and list if ye would fain believe. I know you and your sad history !'

' Speak on, strange cavalier, I listen !'

' In your youth and beauty you were wooed and won by Don Miguel Castro, and became his loved and honored bride, alike the envy and admiration of all who knew you. For one year bright was your sun of happiness; love crowned each day with flowers, joy wrote its name on all the bright winged hours.

' You had a daughter born—'

' O, God! Yes, that fearful night—why did you recall it !'

' Be calm, lady—my tale is not told. The sweet child lay by your side, when after your hours of pain were past, and both of you slept. You awoke, a ruffian's hands were rudely clasped upon your form, you glanced around to see your babe and she was gone. You were borne by the villain to the dungeon whence I rescued you !'

' Too true—O heaven, too true!' sobbed she, as she bowed her head low on her knees.

' More—and of your child!' said he.

' Is she not dead?' O, if she lives let me fly to her side. O God, how did I love that child, though but for a moment I saw it, and how have I cherished its memory; but sir, you mock me; it is dead!' and the mother who had quickly raised her head as she heard his words, now let it droop in tears again, as bends some lovely flower when the heavy rain beats down.

' Hear my tale, lady, and yet for a while be calm. One short hour before the ruffian bore you from your chamber, while you and your fair babe slept side by side, a tall and noble looking cavalier in the first bloom of his manhood entered your room with fiery haste. He gazed down upon you with wild yet sorrow-

ful look, and as he gazed while wildly throbbed his brain and madly beat his heart, he cried, 'O, God, she—my own Letilla, false! false!'

'O, it was my husband, and his cruel hand'

'Lady, be calm, and break not in upon my story till all is told. He bent down and raised gently in his arms your sleeping babe and fled from the apartment!'

'O, say that he did not slay her, my beautiful, my innocent!'

'No—with hasty steps he bore it from your apartment, and his steps were toward the palace of Don Enrico the governor. Hush, Elizabetta, silence, whatever you may hear, for you too have a part in my tale! There in the governor's palace all was confusion, the Lady Leonor had just given birth to an infant, and mother and child were supposed to be dying, and even then the child, the only daughter of Don Enrico, was a clay cold corse, and ere the hour had passed its mother's spirit had passed away, but a living child lay in the place of her so cold, and the cavalier who had taken it from your side, bore back to his garden and buried the dead infant of Larranaga!'

'And I am—O, what is this mystery?' sobbed Luella.

'You are the child which was brought to me that night by the strange cavalier, and exchanged for the dead. You are not Larranaga's daughter.'

'But mine!' with a cry of wild joy said the lady Letilla, as the natural feelings of a mother seemed unconsciously to fill her breast, and she sprang to meet her child.

'O, it must be so, for a love I cannot speak thrills through my breast!' said the fair Luella as she met the warm embrace of her mother.

'And Juan is not my cousin; O, how

strange is all this, I scarce can comprehend it? He has a father and—'

'You have one also, whom soon you shall see!' said Solonois, interrupting her.

'Her father; O, yet there is a dark and fearful thought that comes within my mind, perhaps it were better that we never meet him, than to meet him in anger; and he tore thee from my side and I fear has caused my sad imprisonment?' said the lady Letilla, mournfully.

'Fear not to meet him, lady; it is but a few hours since I saw him and heard him speak of thee as an injured saint of innocence, and breathe but one wish when he thought that death was near, and that wish was to see thy form and implore thy pardon for the past!'

'I thank thee, God of mercy and HEARER of prayer!' murmured the now happy mother as she dropped to her knees, and each one in that room for a moment breathed in deep and silent prayer their thanks to a strange and mysterious Providence whose ways are not as man's, yet nevertheless are all perfect, all wise, ever beneficent.

Then, as the lady Letilla arose, she turned to Solonois and asked:

'When may I see him?'

'On the morrow's eve. I have a little plan to carry out which if aided by all here will be of more service than any may dream of!'

'All will do their parts, when you so well have fulfilled your own, my husband!' responded the happy wife.

'It is well, I wish as yet all to be kept as it hitherto has, secret from the household. I want to make some arrangements with you, to have the large saloon fitted for a theatre. There will be a tableaux there on the morrow's eve, we will be the actors; two others he sole audience!'

CHAPTER XXIX.

'The baron returned in three days' space,
And his looks were sad and sour;
And weary was his courser's pace,
As he reached his rocky tower.'

'**A**RE you better, my lord Marquis?' said a voice close beside the couch whereon lay Don Miguel on the second night after his injury.

The knight turned him in his bed, but instead of the attendant whom he had left watching by his side when he went to his slumbers but an hour before, he saw the priest who had saved his life and heard his confession.

Gladly gleamed his eyes as he answered,

'Ay, holy father; and now that my mind is relieved by seeing you, I think I am well. Oh, I have pined to know more of you, to be assured of the truth of the blessed dream you placed before me, to see if indeed she lives!'

'You shall, and if you will but meet and aid a simple plan and wish of mine, to-morrow's eve shall place her, bright and fond, forgiving and beautiful, in your arms.'

'By the honor of my knighthood, there is no boon you can ask which I could grant that I would refuse. Say on! Whate'er thou wilt, that shall be done!'

'You know the governor, Don Enrico Larranaga well?'

'I do—he is my sworn compadre!'

'I wish you to get him to accompany you on the eve of to-morrow to his country villa,

there to see the work of a wonderful magician. Tell him that having heard of the strange powers of this wondrous man, you sought to test them, and that as a quiet and fitting place you had chosen to beg the use of his palace hall at the country villa, for you neither dared nor wished a public trial of his powers, which are forbidden by the church. He will not refuse you.'

'No—many a greater boon dare I ask, without fear of refusal; but my daughter is there—how can I meet her?'

'She waits with fond anxiety to meet you.'

'To meet me? Knows she that I am her father?'

'She does, and in her mother's arms awaits your coming!'

'Oh God, are you not the magician of whom you spoke, and is not this all—all a dream?' and with a wild feeling of bewilderment the Marquis closed his eyes and pressed his hand upon them.

When he removed his hand and looked again at the spot where the white-haired priest had stood he was not there; but a tall and richly garbed cavalier stood in his place.

'What may mean this? Dare not to trifle with me, now! Where is the priest?'

Without a word the cavalier pointed to the

black robe and scapulary which with a white-haired wig lay at his feet.

'Strange—strange!' muttered the Marquis. 'Who and what are you, wonderful man?'

'*Solonois the pirate!*'

'Solonois? And this tale, this beautiful, heavenly tale of hope and gladness is—'

'True as the God of truth! Don Miguel de Castro, you have heard that Solonois was terrible, ay, fiendish, in his thirst for revenge, yet never have you heard that he has failed in truth to friend or foe!'

'Man most strange, I doubt you not. But explain all to me now, and every wish and plan of thine will I aid and echo!'

'The tale is simple, and I will make it brief.

'When my band were all destroyed, I who had been saved only by counterfeiting death, came hither in disguise, determined to live only to avenge my wrongs.

'It matters little how, but I found out that my wife whom I supposed slain, when long years ago she was torn from my home, was yet alive. After much pains I sought and found her in a dungeon, whither her father had caused her to be conveyed by Vinas, the same cruel fiend whom you—but I will not pain your heart by speaking of him. I found my wife and at the same time in another dungeon found and released your Letilla.'

'They were both removed to the villa, where now your wife and daughter and my wife and son are together in joy, awaiting one more re-union to fill the cup of bliss!'

'*Your son!* Have you a son?'

'Know you not the brave and beautiful Don Juan?'

'Why, he is the *nephew* of Don Enrico!'

'Not more than Luella is his daughter. He, Juan, is my son, and was spared, as was my wife from death by the governor!'

'When will these mysteries cease?'

'When the drama of to-morrow's eve is finished!'

'But you know not how dangerous it is for you in this city where a price is on your

head and a thousand secret spies are seeking for you?'

'Ay, but I am safe. A deep disguise, quick hand, fleet foot, ready mind and brave heart, can conceal me anywhere! I have often conversed with the governor of late, and several times almost frightened the soul from his body.'

'I have heard of that, but why run such fearful risks?'

'Hath he not the power to give me a free unconditional pardon, as the governor of this island?'

'He has, and shall, ay, or I'll—no, it will not do for me to threaten. But I can say the word that will make him do it!'

'Let him see the magician's power, and then if his heart be human, he will not refuse. Your wife and daughter will play their parts in it, and I have now to beg that whatever you see, even when they appear, your wife and daughter, you do not move or in any way act as if it was aught but magic art that paints the pictures you will see. Let the deception to him be complete until the right time comes for him to be undeceived, and then all will be joy, if all succeeds as I wish.'

'I will do your bidding; you have proved my saviour and my friend; I will prove me yours or perish!'

'Thanks, noble Marquis. I think all danger will be speedily passed, and joy once more come to all our hearths of desolation.'

'You wish me to have the governor at the villa on the morrow's eve?'

'I do—and prepare well his mind for strange things, for strange scenes shall he witness, scenes that will make his heart bleed; but I wound to heal.'

'With anxiety shall I await the hour, and willingly will do my part whatever it may be, to give your plans success.'

'Then I shall hasten back to prepare me for the magic scene!' answered Solonois, as he again gathered the priest's robe around his form, and disguised himself as before.

Another moment and the Marquis was alone.

CHAPTER XXX.

'A wizard of such dreaded fame,
 That when, in Salamanca's cave,
 He wished his magic wand to wave,
 The bells would ring in Notre Dame!
 Some of his skill he taught to me;
 And, Warrior, I could say to thee
 The words, that cleft Eildon hills in three,
 And bridled the Tweed with a curb of stone:
 But to speak them were a deadly sin;
 And for having but thought them my heart within,
 A treble penance must be done.'

DARKENED and gloomy was the vast hall of the country palace of Don Enrico. A few dim lights scattered here and there, gave just light enough to make dark shadows fall in vague shapes along the walls and on the marble floor. All was cold, dark, wild, gloomy and mystical in appearance.

At the lower end of the hall a curtain of black velvet hung from wall to wall, like a pall of death.

Don Miguel de Castro sat in the silent hall with none other by his side but Don Enrico de Larranaga.

The latter shivered in the cold night air, and as he looked upon the curtain, impatiently exclaimed:

'When is this mummerly of yours to begin, Don Miguel? 'Tis damp and chilly here.'

'Call not an art like mine mummerly! First see and then believe!' said a voice so deep and hollow behind the curtain, that it

seemed to sink into the very hearts of the hearers, with a damp and icy chill, for both shuddered as they heard it.

And then while they breathlessly gazed toward the curtain, it slowly parted as wild side, and they beheld a being ever voice in and strange in look as had been a man, pale sound. He was a tall and aged and freezing as the snow that never melts; his night itself ing were his eyes, yet black as dress a robe when light hath perished. His sight were of spotless black; all things, and pale, unblack save his long white hair, and his earthly face.

'Now your wish. Don Miguel Castro, led into my secret Behold, when I have peeped in my book, whom ring, and read one line upon, she, the loved none else dare to look upon shall pass before and chosen of your eyes, not nor speak, or the your eyes; but forever!'

'vision will vanish ready!' answered Don Miguel. 'Proceed, I am ready!'

Scarcely had the words passed from his lips, ere the magician stepped aside, and in another moment the form of a lady, a fair and queenly creature, bearing in her arms an infant, glided gracefully across the room. Slow and noiseless were her steps; she seemed more like a beautiful picture than a reality. Her face alone could be seen; the face of the child was pressed toward her bosom, but in the face Don Miguel instantly recognized his lost Letilla; and when she had disappeared, while tear chased tear down his dark cheeks, he exclaimed:

‘O, God! how natural! Is this mummery, Don Enrico?’

But the latter spoke not; his eyes were fixed; he scarcely breathed until again the magician appeared.

‘I have now a sight for thee, Don Enrico, but beware that you neither speak nor move, else the charm is broken!’

The haughty governor bowed his cold reply, and awaited the scene. For a moment the curtains closed, and then he saw, as they re-opened, a sight which would have frozen the blood and hushed the voice of any father.

He saw the semblance of a dungeon, a damp and noisome hole, upon whose walls the and whirling in huge black drops, amid green

Upon a mouldy, squalid pile of filthy straw, in a garb of with huge stretchedness, lay a female chained little lattice and rusted shackles. Through a glaring eyes, her dungeon door, peered with bars seemed to face so hideous that the very Black, distorted shrink from contact with it. this fiend, and so and fearful to behold was and miserable O, God, how pale, and lost, damp and noisy, looked she who lay in that

Don Enrico in place. death, gasped and shuddered, turned pale as he opened them she closed his eyes. When had closed; but he was gone, the curtains and knew that he had recognized the scene, his daughter. seen the semblance of

‘Is this mummery?’ asked Don Miguel, who with wondering asked Don Miguel had gazed breathlessly up and tearful eyes, in the scene.

‘Tis strange, O, wondrous strange!’ sighed the governor, but he shuddered as he spoke.

Then again the curtains unclosed, and he saw a room so like the bed-chamber of the dead Lady Leonor, that involuntarily he started and half arose, but sank back again as he saw that the bed whereon she had died seemed now to hold a human form, and upon a couch beside it lay the still form of an infant.

A masked cavalier stole in with cautious care, and he bore in his arms also an infant which seemed asleep. He was masked, dressed in the richest style of Spain’s proud grandees, and his light step and hasty manner betokened that his errand was one which required the mask he wore. Hastily taking up the child which lay as if it were dead upon the couch, he placed the one he had brought in its place, and then hastened out with the other.

‘By heavens—what means this mummery? There is some trick in this!’ shouted the governor; but in an instant the curtains closed, and the scene had passed away.

‘You erred in speaking, Don Enrico. Vain my art if my orders be not obeyed; be silent and you shall see a sight which may remove your doubts!’ said the stern, deep voiced magician, as again the curtains unclosed, and then as he retired, Don Enrico saw a perfect semblance of his own private chamber. His escrutoire, books, couch, even the furniture and all things seemed the same.

Upon his couch lay a form, which, though its face was turned away, he knew by its dress and appearance to be a semblance of himself. And yet he thought that he could see it move, as if with the regular breathings of slumber, and then he held his very breath as he saw a form glide into the room, and recognized his dark and fearful enemy. He scarcely breathed as he saw that in the magician’s scene, Solonoi looked as terrible even as in real life, and with burning eyes he saw the pirate approach the couch where rested his semblance. He marked the dark and revengeful frown of the pirate, as he

bent down over the couch and raised the gleaming dagger over his body, ready to strike it to his heart.

This scene was too much for the nerves of Don Enrico, and he was about to speak, when another vision came and froze his utterance. It was Medora, beautiful, but sad and sorrowful in her beauty; and as in robes of white, like an angel being, she glided to her father's couch, she touched the pirate's hand, his dagger fell harmless to his side; he turned toward her with a look of beaming, living tenderness, and both knelt beside the sleeper's couch, and raised their hands as if in prayer!

Don Enrico's stony gaze of astonishment changed; his heart seemed full, and without uttering a word he burst into tears, and bowed his head upon the shoulder of his friend.

When again he raised his eyes, the scene was changed.

The view showed the interior of the dungeon once more, where before he had gazed upon his daughter as she lay in chains and misery. But now pale, motionless, with her thin, white hands crossed meekly on her breast, she lay as if she had fallen into that eternal rest which the weary ones of earth so crave to gain. O, beautiful, yet with a look of sad reproach upon her face, lay she there.

'O, God!' he groaned in the bitterness of his heart, 'O, God, have I done this?' but as he clasped his hand to his brow, the scene disappeared, and then came another.

The corse of Solonois, dressed in noble apparel, lay upon the side of a mountain rock, a scene where loneliness and grandeur were prominent. As the form lay so that the face could all be seen, there was a noble calmness in its expression, a look in which no guile, bloodthirstiness, or aught but honesty and manhood breathed. From his full, manly breast the red blood seemed slowly to ooze, as if some foe's keen blade had just entered the heart.

A look almost of sorrow, certainly not of revenge, now gathered upon the face of Don Enrico; but he remained breathless, for he saw that another change was coming.

Slowly did the fair Medora, dressed as before, in white, ascend the rock and kneel beside the bleeding form. Without a tear, in the depth of that grief which cannot weep, she pressed her lips to his pale brow, and then raised her eyes towards the heavens, while her lips moved in prayer.

Then came another. It was Juan. With hasty steps he too came and knelt beside his mother, and kissed his bleeding father's lips.

'O, God, too true—too horrible! who can fathom this?' groaned Don Enrico, as shuddering he pressed his hands to his face, and hid the scene so harrowing from his eyes.

When again he glanced toward the scene, another change had taken place, a change more striking than all that yet he had seen.

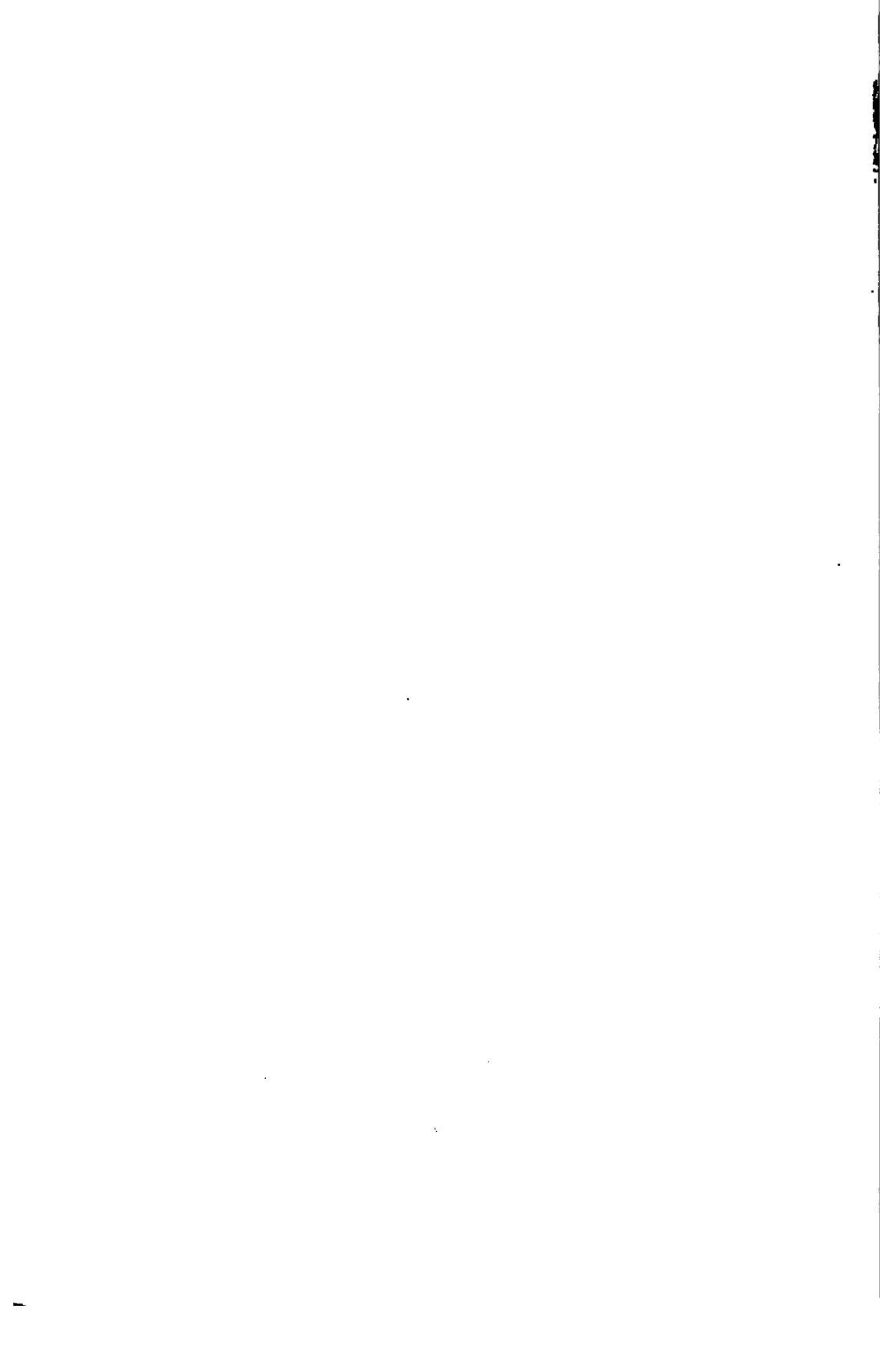
A beautiful landscape was represented, and near the root of an old tree sat Solonois and his Medora, side by side, apparently in health and beauty; a little further on, Lobo, the negro hangman, lay upon the grass, and his little Quasey, the hideous dwarf, was playing numberless antics about him; beneath the shade of a flowering tree sat two lovers, and as their arms encircled each the other, their lips met in the language which love so loves to speak. The tableaux was finished by two who walked slowly by, and they were the Lady Letilla and Elizabetta.

Long and wildly gazed the governor and Don Miguel on this beautiful scene.

'O, would to God that it were true and could be so!' cried the governor, but as he spoke, darkness came upon the scene, and it vanished from their sight. 'O, Medora, how have I loved thee, and now I fear that thou art lost forever; no, this is but a work of art, my brain has been turned by this wild fantasy!'

'Would you be happier were it real?' asked Don Miguel.

'O, God, yes! I loved Medora as never daughter was loved before, and if yet she lives she shall be restored to my heart and home, and even *he*, for her sake, shall be pardoned; yes, Solonois shall be free, if she lives to——'



'Thank her father for his mercy, and love him for his kindness,' murmured a sweet, soft voice behind him, and Don Enrico turned but to reel and fall into the warm embrace of his daughter. Half fainting he gasped:

'O, God, I bless thy name for this!' then as he somewhat recovered, he saw that by Medora's side knelt the husband of her love, the dreaded pirate chief, and the son, Juan.

'Rise, my children!' said he, kindly, but feebly. 'Rise, but where is my other daughter? Where is Luella?'

'You have no other daughter; do you remember the magician's scene in the Lady Leonor's chamber?' said Solonois.

'I do—O, was that too, a semblance of truth, and he who took the dead away and left the living, that cavalier was——'

'Myself, Don Enrico!' said the Marquis, 'and now, Sir Magician, I claim thy promise. My bride and child, where are they?'

'Miguel—dear Miguel! Father, O, my father!' uttered two soft, sweet voices close beside him, and the next instant he had clasped them both to his heart. They had approached him unobserved while he was speaking, and now Elizabetta, with her matronly face dimpled over with smiles, as is a lake in summer time with sunbeams, joined the group.

For a moment Don Enrico gazed around on all, as if he yet feared that this was all a dream, but he saw love, and life, and warm reality in all around, and gladly beamed his joyous face as he cried:

'Solonois, your pardon shall be published far and wide with the morrow's sun. Juan shall have a portion to add to his wedded happiness which might befit a prince's nuptials, and all—all shall be happy!'

'I alone, it seems, am left without a mate, but you, my Medora, and your husband and children shall be the sunbeams of my declining years, and happiness shall repay past sorrows.

'Let us now retire to a more pleasant apartment in the palace, and let sounds of revelry and joy keep time with the echo in

our hearts, and you, Don Miguel, with Don Francisco, must explain what as yet is a confused mystery to me. I know not how when all of these mysteries have been developed, I only know that I have my children. But let us go.'

As the party turned to leave the hall, the governor recoiled and shuddered as he saw Lobo and the hideous little dwarf kneeling at his feet, directly in the way he was about to pass.

'Well, Lobo, have you any favor to ask? It shall be granted, for you seem to have played a part, I know not of what importance in this singular drama.'

A roguish twinkle seemed to play about the negro's thick lips for a moment, as if the memory of a former scene in which Don Enrico had unconsciously borne a part had crossed his mind, but he answered,

'Will master pardon Lobo, too?'

'Yes, if you have done aught that deserves a pardon! If all this day I had but two words to utter, one would be joy, the other, mercy!'

'Lobo don't want to be hangman any more! He want little house, he got little money and little Quasey, he want to retire from public office and learn how to be good!'

'You shall have your wish, Lobo!' and as he said this the party moved on.

* * * * *

One month after that night, the palace of Don Miguel de Castro resounded with bursts of joyous revelry; music and gaiety were the order of the evening, and the most magnificent fête that ever astonished the Habaneros passed off.

It was in the hour of marriage of Don Juan and the fair Luella.

We need not follow the history of them or their parents. Suffice it to say that the clouds which had lowered over their house, were in the bosom of joy's deep ocean buried forever; and that their memory served less to sadden than to gladden by its bright and sweet contrast, the bliss of the present.

O, thus may all of our life-dramas end in joy and peace; if clouds our early paths obscure, O, may they serve to make us pure and prepare us for good things thereafter.

THE END.



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